

**WEEKEND
EDITION**
EUROPE & PACIFIC

COLLEGE HOOPS



Gearing up for
NCAA action

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leap to biblical
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'jewel' Gdansk
by foot

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TRAGEDY AT FORT HOOD

Five years after the worst
mass killing on a US military installation,
grief comes once more to Texas base.

NOT AGAIN



TAMIR KALIFA/AP

Lucy Hamlin and her husband, Spc. Timothy Hamlin, wait for permission to re-enter Fort Hood, Texas, on Wednesday after an Iraq War veteran opened fire, killing three people and wounding 16 others before shooting himself.

Gunman who killed 3 fellow soldiers and wounded 16 before
committing suicide had no combat experience, signs of outward injury

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The data that we have are not perfect, and they are mixed. But they do strongly suggest that although mammography does have benefits, it does also have a lot of harms, and those harms are not insubstantial."

— Lydia Pace,
women's health researcher

See story on Page 11

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COMING SOON

Science &
Medicine

Dance
moves that
thrill or
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MILITARY

Civilians slam cuts in medical care access at Vicenza

By NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — An abrupt disruption to civilians' access to care at Vicenza's Army health center two weeks ago has left people essentially without care and has raised questions about how thousands of civilians will receive medical care in the future, those who attended a charged public meeting Wednesday told health center commander Col. Andrew Barr.

Barr apologized repeatedly for the way in which civilians who had long been able to make appointments at the center were told recently that the procedure had been changed — with a Facebook message and a short, hasty list of local Italian physicians who might be available, including one who turned out to be an acupuncturist.

Barr said he'd had little choice when he learned that active-duty troops and their families, who have the highest priority for health care under Tricare, the Army's health insurer, were being turned away because civilians were calling early and snatching up appointments, he said.

"Beneficiaries were being put on hold and not getting an appointment," Barr said.

Many civilians at the Wednesday meeting were not mollified.

"One of our teachers tried to make an appointment," said Lorrie Vallone, who was at the meeting representing Vicenza middle school teachers. "She called five different Italian physicians. They wouldn't see her without a European Union medical card."

The teacher also repeatedly had called the center, as instructed on Facebook, attempting — and failing — to get a same-day appointment there.

"Her child was very sick and she couldn't be seen at the clinic or on the economy," Vallone said. She and her child ended up at



Col. Andrew Barr, commander of the Vicenza garrison's health center, said at a meeting on Wednesday he had no choice but to abruptly reduce civilians' access to health care at the center.

the local emergency room at San Bortolo Istituto, Vallone said.

The teacher's experience is an example of a dramatic change for civilians in the way the center does business in an Army of tightened budgets, reduced personnel and diminished resources.

Defense department civilians such as teachers, GS workers, contractors and others covered by health insurers other than Tricare, are seen on a "space available" basis at military hospitals and clinics, after a number of other groups with higher priority — troops, their families, retirees.

A decade ago, space was routinely available. But several years ago, the appointments at U.S. Army health clinics in Germany became hard to get; civilians were forced to see local doctors.

About the same time, the Army began shutting down maternity and same-day surgery units, sending everyone who needed those services, including soldiers, to local doctors or the Army hospital at Landstuhl.

Vicenza maintained those ser-



PHOTOS BY NANCY MONTGOMERY/Stars and Stripes

Vicenza's Army Health Care Center, built for almost \$48 million in 2010, will cease doing same-day surgery and providing obstetrical and maternity care in June and has significantly decreased access to routine care to some 3,000 Defense Department civilians.

vices until recently. Vicenza's birthing center, which opened to great fanfare in 2005 after years of complaints about local Italian maternity care and the language barrier, is closing in June, along with same-day surgery.

"We've been very fortunate in Vicenza for a long time," Barr said.

Barr said an increase in troops and their families, along with no increases in staff, meant that some 3,000 Vicenza civilians now will have to be more reliant on local Italian medical providers, though many of them speak little English and require payment up front.

An exception is civilian babies and children needing immunizations, who will continue to be able to receive care at the center, which opened in a new, \$48 million building on Caserma Ederle less than four years ago.

According to the center, civilians with acute issues such as flu may still call for same-day appointments for themselves or their children starting at 11 a.m. If there are any appointments left before the center closes at 4:30 p.m., they will be seen.

"There should be no doubts. The message is, 'We take care of civilians (for acute issues) ... when space is available,'" Barr said.

He declined to say how many appointments might be available for civilians with acute issues

on a given day, and people at the meeting were skeptical.

"The sense of people about the call-in is that it's a de facto 'you can't be seen,'" Stephen Salerno, a civilian lawyer, told Barr. "Just come out and tell us, 'You can't be seen.'"

An estimated 500 civilians with chronic conditions — diabetes, asthma and others — who saw center doctors are to be "transitioned" to local doctors, Barr said, and won't be seen for tests, follow-up or telephone consultations at the health center. Neither will civilian women needing pap smears or other routine preventive health care.

"It is a reduction in service whether you want to admit that or not," Vallone said.

The meeting made clear that a host of issues resulting from the change have yet to be addressed. Barr was asked what people taking medications not available in Italy would do. Such patients include a significant number of children on medication for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Other questions concerned how to coordinate care and records between U.S. health providers and Italian doctors, and refilling drug prescriptions for people who will shortly run out of their medications.

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Aid agency accused of cover-up in Afghanistan

IG report on USAID raises concerns about risk of contracting with organizations tied to terrorism

By Tom Vanden Brook
USA Today

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Agency for International Development withheld information from Congress showing the Afghan government's apparent inability to prevent its ministries from doing business with people tied to terrorism, according to a letter from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction and documents obtained by USA Today.

The letter, from SIGAR's general counsel asserts that USAID "covered up information" showing some Afghan ministries can't account for cash or what they own. The audits show the Afghan government has failed to monitor the "potential risk of contracting with suppliers/beneficiaries having links with terrorist organizations."

"USAID kept this information from Congress and the American people," said John Sopko, the inspector general. "As a former federal prosecutor and congressional investigator, to me it begs the questions: What were they trying to hide, and why?"

John Sopko
Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction

Wednesday, saying the agency had provided members of Congress and their staffs full access to its documents upon request. SIGAR's claim relates to documents that have been made available to Congress, Herrick said. The agency hasn't hidden anything, he said.

"Congress and U.S. government auditors have access to USAID documents in unredacted form, either in their offices or at USAID, and we reject the claim that we have improperly withheld information," Herrick said.

Congress may take up the issue Thursday when Sopko and an official from USAID are scheduled to appear before a panel of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. USAID has spent nearly \$1.5 billion in taxpayer funds to help build infrastructure in Afghanistan.

"USAID must be accountable to the American people for how they are spending taxpayer dollars in Afghanistan," Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, who chairs the committee's panel on national security, told USA Today in a statement.

The lack of controls to prevent Afghan ministries from contracting with people connected to terrorist organizations pops up throughout a series of audits on the agencies obtained by USA Today through a Freedom of Information Act request. A KPMG audit of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development says, "A mechanism has not been developed for screening of beneficiaries for their possible links with terrorist organizations be-

fore signing contracts or providing funds to the suppliers."

A copy of USAID's version of the same document shows that mentions of links to terrorism are blacked out.

"Withholding information that highlights concerns about U.S. taxpayer dollars being funneled

to terrorists is reprehensible and circumvents our system of checks and balances," said Scott Amey, general counsel for the Project on Government Oversight, a non-partisan watchdog group. "USAID should come clean to the military and SIGAR to ensure that lives are not at risk, mission priorities are

attainable, and wasteful spending isn't rampant."

Information USAID has blacked out in documents released publicly includes names and other data that identify Afghans who could be at risk of retaliation, Herrick said. SIGAR, in its letter, acknowledges the need to limit dissemination of such information.

"It is a common practice to redact information from the general public about individuals who could come into harm's way if their names were released or vulnerabilities that could be exploited by unscrupulous actors if exposed," Herrick said.



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MIDEAST

Afghans largely left to monitor own election

By HEATH DRUZIN
Stars and Stripes



KABUL — Although many foreign election monitors have left Afghanistan following a recent string of high-profile attacks in the capital, analysts say their presence may not be the key to a successful vote on Saturday.

More important, analysts say, will be how many of the 265,000 registered Afghan monitors show up on election day and the resilience of the Afghan people in defying threats from the Taliban to disrupt the elections and to take vengeance on those who vote.

"It chips away at the credibility (of the election), but it's not a death blow at all," Graeme Smith, the International Crisis Group's senior analyst in Afghanistan, said of the departure of many foreign observers.

Avoiding the widespread fraud and ballot-stuffing reported during the 2009 election is critical now as voters prepare to participate in the first democratic change of power in the country's history by electing a president who will oversee the departure of all foreign combat troops from Afghanistan by the end of the year.

Experts say avoiding the mess of the 2009 election — in which the runner-up, Abdullah Abdullah, quit in disgust rather than participate in a run-off with President Hamid Karzai — also is key to future international assistance.

There is a great deal of money at stake for a country that relies almost exclusively on international assistance to fund its government. One stipulation of the nations that pledged \$16 billion in continuing aid at the 2012 Tokyo Conference was that this year's election be "free, fair, transparent, and inclusive."

"International powers have said in private to various candidates that if it is a stolen election, there's a lot of things that won't get paid for," said Kate Clark, an analyst with the Afghanistan Analysts Network. "You can't steal an election and expect financial aid."

Though foreign observers play an important role in keeping tabs on Afghanistan's elections, it is Afghan observers who are the most crucial piece of the monitoring regime, Clark said.

"The key people are the locals — there are more of them and they can get out more," Clark said, referring to areas of the country considered too unsafe for foreigners.

But will they? Jandaq Spinghar, director of Afghanistan's leading domestic election observer group, the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan, said his organization feels under increasing threat after two recent attacks on the Afghan government's election commission. Several of the foundation's senior observers have resigned under threat and the group has greatly increased security at its Kabul office, he said.

The monitors' concerns were underscored by a Taliban statement released Wednesday that warned Afghans to stay away from the polls and that polling stations, voters and election workers would be considered legitimate targets for attack.

"FEFA is a player in the electoral process, so we have concerns we might also come under attack," Spinghar said.

Due to changes in the makeup of the Electoral Complaints Commission, the government body tasked with resolving election disputes, there will be less of a foreign role in adjudicating the results of the vote.

In 2009, three foreigners served on the five-person complaints commission, but this year, all members are Afghans hand-picked by Karzai, who has ruled Afghanistan since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion that ousted the Tal-



HEATH DRUZIN/Stars and Stripes

Employees of the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan, Afghanistan's main domestic election monitoring group, work at the foundation's offices March 31.

See a video about life on the Afghan campaign trail
stripes.com/go/afganelection



iban and is barred from running for a third term. The Independent Election Commission also is made up of Karzai appointees, and some experts say the political nature of the appointments of both bodies increases the chances of fraud.

"Even the IEC is sometimes not impartial — the election commission feels enmity towards the observers and might not allow observers to be present inside (some of) the polling stations," Spinghar said.

Noor Mohammad Noor, spokesman for the Independent Election Commission, the Afghan government's election organizing body, said he's confident in a high turnout and a credible election.

"We are working to conduct the election and be sure that the majority of people participate and the majority accept (the results)," he said.

Having fewer international monitors on the ground may have a limited impact on preventing fraud in the election, but some see their presence as a boost to confidence in the results, both for Western countries Afghanistan relies on for aid and for Afghans.

Spinghar worries that having fewer international observers could have a psychological effect on both voters and candidates. "They should not break their commitment. They have to stay on their commitment; otherwise the Taliban will succeed," he said.

According to the Independent Election Commission, more than 330 foreign observers from 16 organizations have registered as election monitors. That's down sharply from the 1,200 who participated in the 2009 presidential poll, according to The Associated Press.

Among the international election monitoring and advising groups that pulled out of Afghanistan recently was the National Democratic Institute, one of whose monitors was among nine people killed in a March 20 attack on the heavily fortified Serena Hotel in Kabul.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe also has pulled out its observers, but has since decided to send back roughly half of its 15-person election advisory team, according to a spokesman. Democracy International has not pulled any of its 18 staffers from Afghanistan, but has decided against sending 10 additional observers, Jed Ober, Democracy International's director of programs, said.

"Given the situation in Afghanistan right now, we didn't think it was prudent to bring in additional observers," he said.

Although the recent violence has scared away foreigners, it does not seem to have dampened election enthusiasm among Afghans in Kabul, where people stood in lines for hours to register to vote and often struck a defiant tone when asked if they are worried about violence at the polls.

"There is violence; there are threats to the lives of our people," said Zia Ahmad Pollazi, 53,

a teacher from Kabul. "But for God's sake and for the sake of our nation, we must vote. We are not afraid."

Voter enthusiasm as well as a vigorous and truly competitive campaign make Clark optimistic that Afghans can avoid the acrimony of the 2009 presidential election.

"I'm hoping this time will be better because there has been a genuine campaign; lots of campaign rallies, lots of interest in the media," she said. "It's not a sham competition."

Of course, in some districts with a heavy Taliban presence, the outlook among voters is much different. While more polling stations are expected to be open than in 2009, roughly 10 percent of the 7,300 polling stations across the country will be closed due to security concerns. Afghans must cut their fingers into blue ink to show they have voted, and among the Taliban threats is amputating the digits of anyone with an ink-stained finger.

Speaking by telephone from Sangin District, one of the most violent corners of Helmand province, tribal leader Hajji Musa Khan said residents there want to vote but that he and many others there will sit out the election because of threats from the Taliban. "If they capture someone with ink on their finger, they should be happy if only their finger is cut off," Khan said.

Stars and Stripes reporter Josh Smith and Zubair Babakarkhail contributed to this report.

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OMBUDSMAN

MILITARY

Unit puts a new spin on old payday activities

By MATT MILLHAM
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany—The Army's on a bit of a retro kick, but perhaps no unit is taking it as far as the 21st Theater Sustainment Command, which is bringing back a tradition that many young soldiers know only from the griping of crusty old sergeants: payday activities.

The tradition dates to a time when soldiers were paid in cash and paid their bills in person. On paydays, soldiers were obliged to show up in their dress greens and were subjected to inspections. About midday, neatly dressed battalions of soldiers were allowed to leave work early to head into town with wads of cash to pay their bills.

Though cash payments gave way to checks and later electronic transfers, parts of the tradition of payday activities largely survived until the wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan — namely, regular uniform inspections.

"I think when 9/11 came around, we didn't have a lot of time for that," said Sgt. 1st Class Wesley Coombs, an 18-year Army veteran.

Now, with one war over and another winding down, they do.

The TSC's updated version of payday activities — called "Millrinder Time" in a tip to the unit's nickname — is similar to payday activities of old in its resurrection of uniform inspections, said Command Sgt. Maj. Brian Mainor, the top enlisted soldier in the TSC's Special Troops Battalion and a 26-year veteran. The focus, however, has changed, he said.

"Now the focus is readiness, well-being of the soldier, counseling — just to sharpen those tools that we lost during the war."

Many midcareer soldiers have spent years preparing for deployments but, like

21st Staff Sgt. Juna Cyriaque, don't know what the Army was like even a decade and a half ago. She'd heard of payday activities and doesn't really think of Millrinder Time as the same thing — no half-day off, no going out to pay the power company.

But it does symbolize a return to standards that many think have suffered during wartime.

"I think that we should always have time for standards," she said. "Because the Army is a profession. If we walk around looking like ... we're crazy, we don't set the standards; no one is going to take us seriously."

"I don't know how it used to be," said Donald Mayfield Jr., 20, a supply specialist from Lake Charles, La. "But I can say it definitely is a good thing going back to it."

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MATT MILLHAM/Stars and Stripes

Sgt. 1st Class Geriberto Dragon Jr. corrects a deficiency on a soldier's uniform during an in-ranks inspection Thursday at Panzer Kaserne.



LARRY REID/Courtesy of the US Air Force

An MQ-1B Predator remotely piloted aircraft taxis on a runway at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., in 2008.

Power failure downed Predator returning from Africa mission

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — A loss of power caused a remotely piloted MQ-1B Predator to crash into the Mediterranean Sea last fall while returning from a mission over Africa, the Air Force announced late Wednesday.

A malfunctioning power converter in the aircraft's control module, which led to the loss of stabilizer control and engine power, caused the mishap, according to an abbreviated accident investigation report released by Air Combat Command.

The aircraft, deployed from the 432nd Wing at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., was returning from a 20-hour intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance mission for AFRICOM, a news release said.

The Air Force did not say from what location the drone had been flying or what particular mission in Africa it was supporting. The aircraft and one communication pod were lost on impact — a loss valued at approximately \$5.3 million, according to the news release. There were no injuries or damage to other government or private property.

Flight controllers lost commu-

nications with the aircraft while preparing to hand the unmanned aerial vehicle over to launch-and-recovery controllers, according to the news release. Two seconds before losing its satellite link, the aircraft transmitted a set of electrical, flight-control and engine-warning indications. Investigators probing the crash determined that was due to the power malfunction, the news release said.

At that point, the Predator lost control and began "a rapid spiral descent into the Mediterranean Sea."

The accident was among at least four involving the Air Force's MQ-1B Predators in 2013.

In May, a Predator crashed 5.6 hours into a local training mission near Creech Air Force Base, according to the Air Force's accident investigation report on the incident.

In June, another Predator crashed during a landing attempt at Jalalabad Air Base, Afghanistan, in windy conditions. An Air Force Predator also crashed in October about 6 miles from Holloman Air Force Base, N.M., while conducting a routine training mission.

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UKRAINE UNREST

Ukraine crisis figures in Baltics exercise

By ADAM L. MATHIS
Stars and Stripes

SIAULIAI, Lithuania — What NATO considers normal Russian military activity over the Baltic airspace has heightened the security concerns of Lithuania in the wake of Moscow's recent annexation of the Crimean peninsula in Ukraine.

A routine military exercise involving Baltic air forces earlier this week took on greater significance because of the Ukraine crisis.

Speaking at the 17th Baltic Region Training Event at Siauliai air base in Lithuania, Lithuanian Defense Minister Juozas Olekas said Tuesday he wanted more NATO troops to be stationed in the Baltic region.

He said his request was prompted by an increase in Russian military activity around the Baltic states and Russia's actions in Ukraine.

Russia has been engaged in "very active" movements along Lithuania's western borders, Olekas said. NATO ground forces in the region and visits from NATO navies would counteract these movements and military exercises in Kaliningrad, a Russian territory separate from Russia proper that borders on the Baltic Sea, Lithuania and Poland.

The training event, usually held three times each year, offers an opportunity for NATO and other militaries to train their air forces. This year's brought together NATO and Sweden, a nonmember whose government is also concerned about recent Russian foreign policy moves.

In response to the Ukraine crisis, the U.S. Air Force last month deployed six additional F-15C Eagle fighters to Siauliai along with KC-135 aerial refueling aircraft to reinforce the four F-15s already there as part of NATO's regular Baltic air policing contingent.

The program was set up 10



Above: An F-15C Eagle, foreground, stationed at Siauliai air base, Lithuania, and a Swedish JAS-39 Gripen Fighter fly to a training exercise over the Baltic Sea on Tuesday.

Left: A Lithuanian servicemember sits in the back of a C-27 flying toward Sweden as part of the training exercise with NATO.

PHOTOS BY ADAM L. MATHIS
Stars and Stripes

years ago to protect the airspace of alliance members Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which don't have their own fighter aircraft. Britain, France, Germany and Denmark have proposed sending additional fighters because of the crisis.

Though NATO's Combined Air Operations Center in Uedem, Germany, has detected increased Russian activity in the airspace over the Baltics, officials there have downplayed its significance. The center, which monitors the airspace for NATO nations in

northern Europe, said they had scrambled NATO fighters to intercept planes in the Baltic region 46 times in 2012.

That number is not unusual, officials at the center said. Rather, it represents an increase in Russian activity since 2006 and a recovery of power lost after the Soviet Union's collapse.

"It's just Russia's political aims writ large, and so we're seeing post-Cold War," Group Capt. Stephen Richards, director of the air operations center, said during a press briefing at the center.

"When Russian air activity really did take a real nose dive, we hardly saw any activity at all. We're now back in more positive times for Russia in terms of their air force, and we're seeing a slow increase in activity."

Lt. Gen. Joachim Wundrak, commander of the center, said that some Russian aircraft fly over international waters and do not file flight plans or send out transponder signals that can be monitored by civilian air traffic controllers. While that practice doesn't violate international law,

it is potentially dangerous for civil air traffic, so NATO jets will scramble and broadcast the position of the Russian aircraft to the civilian authorities.

"We would like to see (the Russians) more following international civil procedures, and that would make our life easier," Wundrak said.

Lithuania takes a much more suspicious view of Russian aerial activity. Before NATO established the Baltic air policing mission in 2004, Olekas said, many Russian aircraft crossed the border, and NATO's presence is what currently deters them from the area.

The air policing mission does more than just provide security for NATO states. It also helps train other countries in the region for possible air encounters.

On Tuesday, a Lithuanian C-27 from Siauliai Air Base flew over the Baltic Sea and simulated a loss in communications with officials on the ground. The Swedish air force responded, sending two JAS-39 Gripen Fighters to practice intercepting the plane and communicating with the pilots through visual means.

Svenska Dagbladet reported in April last year that Russian aircraft conducted simulated attacks on two areas of the country with military assets in March of last year. However, they did not leave international airspace.

Wundrak said as long as Russians fly in their own or international airspace, events like the simulated attack on Sweden are matters of perception.

Asked about his own perception of the incident, Wundrak said: "I'm not here to perceive things, I'm here to follow my rules and to fulfill my mission."

"We are working to a clear, agreed set of rules, so for the time being I cannot see any really problematic action against NATO airspace."

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Navy warship heads to Black Sea to replace USS Truxtun

By HENDRICK SIMOES
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Navy warship is on its way to the Black Sea as part of the ongoing response to Russia's actions in Ukraine, State Department officials said.

In the immediate aftermath of Russia's takeover of Crimea, the guided-missile destroyer USS Truxtun sailed to the Black Sea, where it conducted exercises with the Bulgarian and Romanian navies, practicing basic maneuvers and drills.

The Truxtun left the Black Sea March 21 to continue its scheduled deployment as part of the George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group, currently in the Middle East. A new Navy warship in the Black Sea would be a replacement for the Truxtun, officials said.

The U.S. Navy would not confirm which ship it would send into the area. Two destroyers — the USS Donald Cook and the USS Ramo — are currently in the vicinity, taking part in an exercise in the eastern Mediterranean with the Greek and Israeli navies.

"We are making plans to meet the intent vocalized by (U.S. and NATO officials) to lay out a sustainable maritime presence in the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea, but we do not have anything to announce at this time," said Capt. Gregory Hicks, of the U.S. European Command. He said the Navy routinely operates ships in the Black Sea to demonstrate U.S. commitment to working closely with allies in the region.

On Thursday, Russian Foreign

Minister Sergei Lavrov criticized the deployment of U.S. warships in the Black Sea during a joint press conference with Kazakhstan's foreign minister.

According to Russian media reports, Lavrov accused the U.S. of violating the Montreux Convention — a 1936 international agreement that restricts the passage through the Bosphorus Straits and the Dardanelles of naval ships not belonging to Black Sea states.

Meanwhile, U.S. and NATO leaders have expressed concern over Russia amassing tens of thousands of troops on its border with Ukraine.

Along with a set of sanctions against Russia, the U.S. has been bolstering its military presence throughout the region in a show of force to reassure allies and improve the military's ability to

respond to a crisis. "Obviously, we're working a diplomatic track, but we need to have things in place that do reassure our allies in case the diplomatic track takes longer than we want or while we try to make progress on it," State Department deputy spokeswoman Marie Harf said during a press briefing Wednesday.

In recent weeks the U.S. has sent six additional F-15s to augment NATO's Baltic air policing mission and a dozen F-16s to Poland to train with the Polish air force. Additionally, in the midst of increasing tensions, the Pentagon announced Wednesday that it was sending 175 more Marines to Romania, where 300 are already present. Officials said the move was unrelated to the current crisis between Ukraine and Russia.

In a sign that the crisis is deepening, NATO officials suspended all "practical civilian and military cooperation" with Russia Wednesday and announced that NATO would intensify its cooperation with Ukraine.

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UKRAINE UNREST

Director: Peace support is focus of training in Bulgaria

By MATT MILLHAM
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. director of a military exercise in Bulgaria on Wednesday played down the drills' significance as a signal to Russia, while drawing a sharp contrast between Moscow's unilateral actions in the Black Sea region and the U.S.-led training there.

Dubbed Saber Guardian, the exercise involves some 700 sol-

diers and 13 countries, including a number of former Soviet Bloc nations that are eager to forge closer bonds with the West. All of the countries involved were welcomed into Bulgaria by its government to work together "in full partnership," Maj. Gen. Richard Longo said.

"You can draw the conclusions as you will," he said.

Longo, the U.S. Army Europe's deputy commander, spoke to Stars

and Stripes by phone Wednesday from Novo Selo training area in eastern Bulgaria, where he's been serving as one of the exercise's directors. The base, a few hundred miles from the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea, is a frequent host of U.S. and NATO forces.

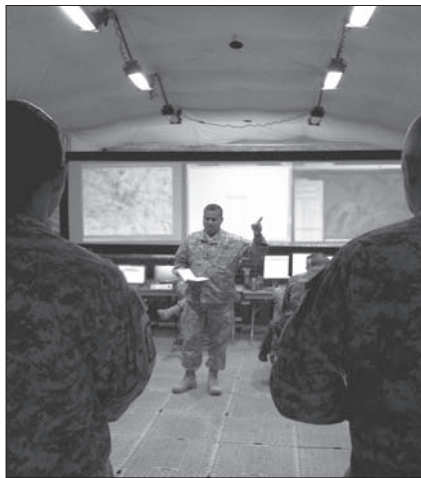
The exercise, which began March 21 and is set to end Friday, was meant to give Black Sea militaries experience in working together with the U.S. and NATO "so that if something ever were to happen and we were required to work together, we will have practiced it," Longo said.

The exercise includes personnel from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine, Turkey and the U.S.

It is focused on peace support and humanitarian assistance — not combat — and geared toward staff officers and leaders who would have to manage such a crisis.

"It's a very safe thing to work together," Longo said. "But if you're in tactical operations center and you are trying to manage information ... it almost doesn't matter what the exact mission is. You still get good training on mission command."

The participation of 16 Ukrainian soldiers in the training was in the works long before the current crisis, Longo said.



PHOTOS BY BROOKS FLETCHER/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Lt. Col. Nat Edwards, U.S. Army Europe's Contingency Command Post deputy chief of operations, briefs staff last week at Novo Selo Training Area, Bulgaria.

About half the Ukrainian contingent was part of a multinational unit trying to manage a series of simulated situations, including riots, a chemical plant explosion and displaced-person camps.

The rest worked with another multinational group devising the disasters behind the scenes.

"We were quite happy that they were able to continue to fulfill their commitment even with ev-

erything that's going on in their country," Longo said.

The next Saber Guardian will take place in Ukraine, he said, noting that the choice of location was "coincidental."

"But that's where it's currently scheduled to take place, and my assumption is that it will take place."

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Soldiers from the Polish Land Forces participate in Saber Guardian 2014, a multinational military exercise involving about 700 military personnel from the U.S. and 12 other nations, mostly in the Black Sea region.

Ousted Ukraine leader is accused of thuggery

The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Interim authorities in Ukraine on Thursday accused President Viktor Yanukovich's government of using a network of hired killers, kidnappers and gangs of thugs to terrorize and undermine the opposition.

A top security official, speaking at the presentation of an official report, said there was evidence Russia's security service assisted their Ukrainian counterparts' attempts to suppress anti-government protests which culminated in bloodshed in February that left more than 100 dead.

Also, Prosecutor General Oleh Mahnitsky said 12 members of an elite riot police unit have been detained on suspicion of shooting protesters.

Yanukovich fled the capital, Kiev, after the culmination of the violence that played out over Feb. 18-20, precipitating the fall of his government.

The identity of the snipers believed to be responsible for most of the deaths is a subject of bitter disagreement. The interim government says Yanukovich ordered snipers to be deployed — a charge Yanukovich denied in an

AP interview on Wednesday.

Opponents of the current leadership say snipers were organized by opposition leaders trying to whip up outrage.

In his interview with the AP, Yanukovich also said he "was wrong" in inviting Russian troops into Crimea, which was swiftly annexed by Moscow following a referendum in which reunion with Russia was backed by 97 percent of those who voted.

Ukraine's fledgling government and Western leaders have since expressed concern about a recent build-up of Russian forces near the Ukrainian border. President Vladimir Putin told German Chancellor Angela Merkel last week that the troops were there for military exercises and that one battalion has already left.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Thursday offered further assurances, telling reporters that Russian troops "will be returning to the place of their permanent quarters as soon as other participants of the exercise have completed their tasks."

Lavrov, however, accused the Ukrainian government "and their patrons in the West of blowing this out of proportion."

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FORT HOOD SHOOTING

Officials: Gunman had no battle experience

Ivan Lopez was being treated for mental health issues

By JENNIFER HLAID
AND CHRIS CARROLL
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The soldier who gunned down three fellow soldiers before taking his own life had no combat experience and showed no outward signs of battle-related injuries, senior Army leaders said Thursday.

Ivan Lopez opened fire with a semi-automatic pistol Wednesday afternoon at Fort Hood, killing three and wounding 16 servicemembers before killing himself when confronted by law enforcement. The post was placed on lockdown immediately and was given the all clear about 9 p.m.

Lopez was being treated for mental health issues and had been fully examined in March by a psychiatrist, Army Secretary John McHugh said during a previously scheduled hearing on budget matters before the Senate Armed Services committee.

"As of this morning, we had no indication on the record of that examination that there was any sign of likely violence, either to himself or to others, [and] no suicidal ideation," he said. "So the plan forward was just to continue to monitor and to treat him as deemed appropriate."

Lopez, who was assigned to the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and had transferred to the central Texas base in February, began shooting about 4 p.m., according to Lt. Gen. Mark Milley, commanding general of Fort Hood, the site of the 2009 massacre by Maj. Nidal Hasan, in which 13 soldiers were killed and more than 30 were wounded.

Lopez entered two buildings — the medical and transportation brigades — and also fired his pistol from a vehicle, according to Milley.

There is no indication that the shooting was terrorism-related but nothing has been ruled out, Milley said.

The violence ended after 15 or 20 minutes, when a female military police officer confronted Lopez, who then shot himself in the head.

The wounded are being treated at Carl R. Darnall Medical Center on post, or the Scott and White Memorial Hospital in nearby Temple, Texas. Dr. Matthew Davis said during a news conference Thursday that he's optimistic none of the three critically wounded patients being treated at Scott & White Memorial Hospital will succumb to their injuries.

The following was known about the wounded at Scott & White:

- It received nine patients;



Krystina Cassidy, left, and Dianna Simpson attempt to make contact with their husbands inside Fort Hood, Texas, while standing outside the Bernie Beck Gate on Wednesday.

PHOTOS BY TAMIR KALFA/AP

Another multiple shooting at Fort Hood

Four and a half years after a mass shooting at Fort Hood claimed 13 lives and prompted a detailed review of security procedures on the large Army base, another multiple shooting incident has occurred, leaving four dead (including the gunman), 16 injured,



Details provided by base commander, Lt. Gen. Mark Milley

1 4 p.m. local time The gunman, enters a building which is part of the 1st Medical Brigade complex at Darnall Medical Center and opens fire with a .45-caliber handgun, then leaves building.

2 Gunman gets into vehicle and begins driving and firing from vehicle, arrives at area housing 49th Transportation Brigade, then shoots himself as military police officer confronted him.

The gunman Identified by others as Ivan Lopez, U.S. Army said Thursday he was deployed for the final months of the Iraq war but did not see combat.

SOURCES: AP, Waco Tribune, Dallas Morning News,

ROBERT DORRELL/MCT

eight male and one female.

- Three remain in critical condition; two are in fair condition, four are in good condition.

- The wounded suffered gunshot wounds to the neck, chest, abdomen and extremities.

- At least two underwent surgery.

Davis added that "several" of the patients were to be discharged Thursday. He described them as

being in good spirits.

An official at Darnall said they're not providing information about the wounded at this time beyond what they issue in news releases.

Testifying on Capitol Hill, McHugh and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno shed additional light on the attacker's background:

A native of Puerto Rico, Lopez

joined the Army in 2008 as an infantry soldier before changing his MOS to truck driver, McHugh told senators. He served four months in Iraq in 2011 during the war's final stretch and apparently never saw combat.

"His records show no wounds, no involvement — direct involvement — in combat," McHugh said. "As Gen. Milley said, [there is] no record of a Purple Heart or any injury that might lead us to further investigate a battle-related TBI or such."

Lopez previously had been on a one-year deployment to the Sinai peninsula. He also served nine years in the Puerto Rico Army National Guard.

"This was an experienced soldier," Odierno said.

Several media sources reported that Lopez was a 34-year-old specialist. McHugh said Lopez had a clean disciplinary record but had been undergoing treatment for mental health conditions including depression, anxiety and sleep disturbances. He was prescribed "a number of drugs to address those, including Ambien," McHugh said.

Lopez, who lived off post, recently purchased the .45-caliber pistol he used for the attack, McHugh said. Army rules don't allow personal weapons to be brought on base without express authorization from a senior commander. But there's little the Army can do to regulate personal weapons of soldiers who don't live on bases, McHugh said.

"We try to do everything we can to encourage soldiers to register their personal weapons even when they live off post," McHugh said. "We are not legally able to compel them to register weapons when they reside off post."

Lopez's wife, also a native of Puerto Rico, has been questioned,

McHugh said. No indication of involvement with extremist or terrorist organizations has come to light, but McHugh said the investigation into that angle would continue "with an open mind."

Fort Hood was the site of a mass shooting in November 2009, when Hasan killed 13 and wounded more than 30 people at a base predeployment clinic. Hasan was found guilty of premeditated murder last summer and was sentenced to death.

The situation is also reminiscent of a 2009 shooting rampage in Iraq in which five Americans were killed.

Sgt. John Russell pleaded guilty in 2013 to killing two medical staff officers and three soldiers at the Camp Liberty combat stress clinic near Baghdad's airport.

The military has said the Russell shooting might have been triggered by combat stress.

Speaking from Hawaii on the first leg of an Asia trip, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel called the shooting a "terrible tragedy."

"My sympathies go out to this strong and resilient community, which has experienced this kind of senseless violence all too recently," he said.

Calling for prayers on behalf of the entire Fort Hood community, President Barack Obama said the soldiers and families there "have sacrificed so much on behalf of our freedom."

"Many of the people there have been through multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. They served with valor and they served with distinction."

and, when they're at their home base, they need to feel safe.

"Obviously this reopens the pain of what happened at Fort Hood five years ago," the president said from Chicago.

There are 65,000 military and family members living on the base, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. An Army recruiting website says Fort Hood has the biggest population among stateside bases.

Local, federal and military authorities are working together in the investigation.

U.S. Rep. Tom Rooney, R-Fla., a former Army lawyer who was stationed at Fort Hood from 2000 to 2002, said, "Nearly five years after the Nidal Hassan shooting at Fort Hood in 2009, it is clear that we must do far more to ensure that our troops are safe when they are at home on base."

In his comments, Hagel added that while base security was reviewed worldwide in the wake of the Hasan killings, "something's not working."

Stars and Stripes reporters Jon Harper, Toshio Suzuki and Audrea Huff contributed to this report. blad.jen@starsandstripes.com Twitter: @jhaid carroll.chris@starsandstripes.com Twitter: @ChrisCarroll_

MILITARY

Veteran's death highlights concerns at VA

Soldier injured during training sought help for years before committing suicide

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

Joseph Petit went to the VA hospital for knee pain and depression and came out on a litany of powerful drugs that he said made him hallucinate.

He repeatedly asked doctors for help with the side effects, but he said they gave him more anti-psychotics, antidepressants and anxiety drugs that made him feel worse.

Petit told his sister that he heard voices and felt bugs crawling under his skin. To keep from harming his family, he would chain himself up in his room at night, according to Brandie Petit. "I understand matters of the brain are extremely delicate," she told Stars and Stripes last month. "But my brother was not crazy before that medicine."

In November 2012, Petit went into the Atlanta VA Medical Center in Decatur, Ga. He was hearing voices and was afraid he would harm his mother, Sandra, with whom he lived.

Petit was discharged from the emergency department and told to see his regular psychiatrist, according to the medical examiner's report obtained by Stars and Stripes.

He never left the hospital.

Petit's body was found the next day in an eighth-floor bathroom. He had put a plastic bag over his head and asphyxiated himself in his wheelchair.

His death is one of four preventable patient deaths at the Atlanta VAMC and one of at least 31 nationwide, part of a growing systemic breakdown in care at Department of Veterans Affairs facilities, according to House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Rep. Jeff Miller and the committee's VA Accountability Watch website.

A VA inspector general report regarding the Atlanta VAMC from April 2013 found mismanagement and a lack of oversight of the mental health department. It also substantiated allegations that there was inadequate coordination, monitoring and staffing for oversight of mental health patient care.

Mental health Service Line managers and staff "voiced numerous concerns including challenges in program oversight, inadequate clinical monitoring, staff burnout and compromised patient safety," the report stated. "The lack of effective patient care management and program oversight by the facility contributed to problems with access to [mental health] care and contributed to 'patients falling through the cracks.'"

Atlanta VAMC officials did not respond to requests from Stars and Stripes seeking comment.

In February, Miller and Sen.

Marco Rubio, R-Fla., introduced the VA Management Accountability Act of 2014 in the House and the Senate, respectively. The legislation by the Florida Republicans would give the VA secretary complete authority to fire or demote VA Senior Executive Service or equivalent employees based on performance — the same authority members of Congress have to fire their own staffers. Congress would then be notified for purposes of oversight.

The legislation was introduced Feb. 11 and the committee heard stakeholder opinions during a March 25 hearing. It has 40 cosponsors from both parties and the support of the major veterans service organizations. House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, joined GOP leaders and representatives of several veterans' service organizations Thursday in the Capitol to discuss the legislation.

"There are some serious problems around the VA," Boehner said during the news conference, and the legislation is "another tool" to hold VA facilities accountable.

"What's missing from the equation is not money or manpower, it's accountability," Miller told Stars and Stripes.

VA officials in Washington declined to provide details regarding Petit's death but said they met with his sister March 8 to discuss the path forward.

"The Department of Veterans Affairs is committed to providing the care and benefits Veterans have earned and deserve," VA spokesman Drew Brookie said in a statement to Stars and Stripes. "One suicide of a Veteran within our care is one too many. When an incident occurs in our system we aggressively identify, correct and work to prevent additional risks."

Injury shattered dreams

Joseph Petit was born in 1970 and raised with faith and "old school values," his sister said.

"It was great being around him," Brandie Petit said. "He was extremely compassionate. He was always trying to help somebody." Petit wanted to join the Army, to go in armor to be "the best of the best," she said.

Petit, who once had a 40-inch chest and was in such good shape that his sister said she thought he resembled Sylvester Stallone — enlisted as an infantryman in 1990.

He got through basic and was scheduled to attend Airborne Training and Ranger Indoctrination Training before being assigned to a Ranger Battalion, according to a letter he wrote to then-Congressman Newt Gingrich in May 1992 that would later be entered into House testimony. Then his world collapsed. Petit injured both knees per-

forming parachute-landing falls during airborne training in March 1991.

In the letter to Gingrich, he complained that he had not been examined by an orthopedic surgeon until more than six months after his injury.



Miller

entitled him to about four months' pay and VA benefits.

Petit asked for help in getting his knees repaired, and said if possible, after surgery, he wanted to continue to serve in the Army. "I still aspire to be an Airborne Ranger," he wrote.

He never got help with his knees.

For about 20 years, Petit sought help through various outlets before trying the VA, his sister said. But as Petit got older, the pain appeared to be gaining the upper hand, his sister said. He became depressed as he spent more and more time in a wheelchair.

Petit's VA doctors told him that the knee pain was in his head — somatoform pain disorder, according to the medical examiner's report — where depression and stress manifest as chronic pain.

In September, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held hearings on preventable deaths and other VA issues. In her testimony, Brandie Petit described how her brother was treated for trying to get help one day without an appointment.

"The VA police physically removed Joseph and put a standing order into place to arrest him if he showed up again without an appointment," she said.

But Petit wanted to stick with the program.

He wanted to stop taking the medications, she said, but he worried they would stop treating his knees if he did.

He spoke of suicide

No matter how much Petit tried to keep what was happening from his family and friends, things were getting worse, she said.

At the hospital, Petit spoke of trying to asphyxiate himself with a plastic bag during appointments, according to the medical examiner's report.

He told friends that VA officials

ignored him when he said he had thought about killing himself. Once before, he went into the bathroom at the VA and tried to asphyxiate himself, but he was found unconscious.

The VA changed some of his medication and sent him home after a week or so, according to House testimony.

Questioning VA leaders

"I know he did what he did, where he did, when he did, for a reason," Brandie Petit said. "He didn't get the help he needed."

Miller first heard of Petit's case in May 2013 after an oversight visit to the Atlanta VAMC, he said.

He asked a room full of its leaders if there were other issues that Congress needed to know about. They didn't tell him about the Petit case until "minutes" before it hit the local press four days later.

"Seeing VA's handling of the incident made me think, 'If this is what it takes for VA leaders to be honest with Congress about what's happening at their facilities, you can't help but question how they operate when they think no one is paying attention,'" he said.

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NATION

Senate to vote on release of torture report

By BRADLEY KLAPPER
AND STEPHEN BRAUN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate Intelligence Committee's expected vote to approve declassifying part of a report on Bush-era interrogations of terrorism suspects puts the onus on the CIA and the White House to speed the release of one of the most definitive accounts about the government's actions after the 9/11 attacks.

Even as Thursday's vote neared, members of the intelligence community raised concerns that the committee failed to interview top spy agency officials who had authorized or supervised the brutal interrogations.

Once the 15-member panel votes as expected to declassify a 400-page summary and the key findings of its report, the CIA will start scanning the report's contents for passages that compromise national security. That has led to fears that the CIA, accused of illegally monitoring the Senate's investigation and deleting files, could sanitize key elements of what Senate investigators aim to be the fullest public reckoning of the "enhanced interrogation techniques" used on al-Qaida suspects in CIA-run prisons abroad. The committee's chairwoman, Sen. Diane Feinstein, D-Calif., has urged the White House to get involved.

"It's important to tell the world, 'Yes, we made a mistake and we're not going to do it again,'" said Sen. Angus King, a Maine independent who plans to vote for the summary's release. The CIA "significantly overestimated" the value of waterboarding, or simulated drowning, and other techniques that can be defined only as torture, he said. The agency never conducted a rigorous internal examination of the effectiveness of its methods, he told The Associated Press in a telephone interview.

Some in the intelligence community said the Senate report, which was written by the committee's Democratic staff, was missing a key element: the voices of key CIA officials. Those missing include former Bush administration officials involved in authorizing the use of waterboarding and other harsh questioning methods, or managing their use in secret "black site" prisons overseas.



RAMON ESPINOSA/AP

A book street vendor passes the time on her smartphone as she waits for customers in Havana, Cuba, on Tuesday. The U.S. secretly financed a social network in Cuba to stir political unrest, according to an Associated Press investigation.

US secretly built 'Cuban Twitter'

USAID-constructed communications network sought to undermine communist government

By DESMOND BUTLER, JACK GILLUM
AND ALBERTO ARCE
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. government masterminded the creation of a "Cuban Twitter" — a communications network designed to undermine the communist government in Cuba, built with secret shell companies and financed through foreign banks, The Associated Press has learned.

The project, which lasted more than two years and drew tens of thousands of subscribers, sought to evade Cuba's stranglehold on the Internet with a primitive social media platform. First, the network would build a Cuban audience, mostly young people; then, the plan was to push them toward dissent.

Yet its users were neither aware it was created by a U.S. agency with ties to the State Department, nor that American contractors were gathering personal data about them, in the hope that the information might be used someday for political purposes.

It is unclear whether the scheme was legal under U.S. law, which requires written authorization of covert action by the president and congressional notification. Officials at USAID would not say who had approved the program or whether the White House was aware of it. The Cuban government declined a request for comment.

At minimum, details uncovered by the AP appear to muddy the U.S. Agency for International Development's longstanding claims that it does not conduct covert actions, and could undermine the agency's mission to deliver aid to the world's poor and vulnerable — an effort that requires the trust and cooperation of foreign governments.

USAID and its contractors went to extensive lengths to conceal Washington's ties to the project, according to interviews and documents obtained by the AP. They set up front companies in Spain and the Cayman Islands to hide the money trail, and recruited CEOs without telling them they would be working on a U.S. taxpayer-funded project.

"There will be absolutely no mention of United States government involvement," according to a 2010 memo from Mobile Accord Inc., one of the project's creators. "This is absolutely crucial for the long-term success of the service and to ensure the success of the Mission."

The project, dubbed "ZunZuneo," slang for a Cuban hummingbird's tweet, was publicly launched shortly after the 2009 arrest in Cuba of American contractor Alan Gross. He was imprisoned after traveling repeatedly to the country on a separate, clandestine USAID mission to expand Internet access using sensitive technology that only governments use.

USAID said in a statement that it is "proud of its work in Cuba to provide basic humanitarian assistance, promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to help information flow more freely to the Cuban people," whom it said "have lived under an authoritarian regime" for 50 years. The agency said its work was found to be "consistent with U.S. law."

Ex-CIA official: No politics behind Benghazi statement

By DONNA CASSATA
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The CIA's former deputy director said Wednesday he deleted references to terrorism warnings from widely disputed talking points on the deadly 2012 Benghazi attack to avoid the spy agency's gloating at the expense of the State Department.

Mike Morell faced more than three hours of questioning from the House Intelligence committee in a rare open session that examined who changed the talking points — and why — in the politically-charged aftermath of the deadly Sept. 11 assault on a U.S. diplomatic mission in Libya.

Four Americans, including U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens, were killed in two attacks over a chaotic period of several hours. Multiple independent and congressional investigations have largely faulted the State Department for inadequate security at the mission.

Morell, a 33-year veteran of the agency who has served six Republican and Democratic presidents, insisted that politics had no bearing on the revisions to the talking points and said he was under no pressure to protect President Barack Obama or then-Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

"I never allowed politics to influence what I said or did. Never," he said.

The White House, wrapped up in a fierce presidential campaign, made only minor editorial changes to the talking points, according to the onetime CIA official.

The intelligence community's talking points, compiled for members of Congress, suggested the Sept. 11 attack stemmed from protests in Cairo and elsewhere over an anti-Islamic video rather than an assault by extremists.

Republicans have accused the Obama administration of trying to mislead the American people about an act of terror-

ism in the weeks before the November election.

Morell deleted references to extremist threats linked to al-Qaida in versions of the talking points that were used by Susan Rice, then U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, in a series of Sunday talk show appearances. Morell said his actions were driven by the information provided by intelligence community analysts and the Defense Department.

He said the CIA knew that some of the individuals involved in the attack were al-Qaida from classified sources, information that couldn't be included unless it was declassified. The talking points were provided to members of the committee for dissemination to the American people.

Morell said he removed references to the warnings based on previous CIA analysis. Otherwise, he said, the talking points would have been a "way for CIA to pound its chest and say 'we warned,' laying all the blame on the State Department."



MANUEL BALCE CENETA/AP

Former CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell testified before the House Intelligence Committee in a rare open session on Wednesday. Morell edited the disputed talking points on the 2012 Benghazi attack.

NATION

Examiners work to ID victims of mudslide

By LISA BAUMANN
The Associated Press

EVERETT, Wash. — As medical examiners painstakingly piece together the identities and lives of the 30 people known killed when a mudslide wiped out a small Washington community, one mystery troubles them.

One set of remains does not fit with the description on the missing persons list, which, as of Wednesday included 17 people.

The medical examiners know it is a male but his remains give no clue as to who he was. They can't even identify his age range. Without possible family members to compare, DNA tests are useless. At this point, gold teeth are all they have to go on.

The mystery underscores the tedious process of identifying remains more than a week after the March 22 landslide that broke off a steep hill, roared across the North Fork of the Stillaguamish River and buried a community at Oso, about 55 miles north of Seattle.



ELAINE THOMPSON/AP

Benton County Assistant Fire Chief Jack Coats surveys the landscape at the scene of a deadly mudslide as an excavator works below to clear a drainage channel Wednesday.

Like the homes, the cars and the other parts of people's lives swept away by the torrent of mud, some bodies are in pieces.

Norman Thiersch, the Snohomish County Medical Examiner, said the goal of the team — which is made up of medical examiners, detectives, dentists and others — is to make sure there is no doubt as to the identities.

"This is not television," he said. "These are methodical, painstaking processes we go through."

Although the identities of 29 of the 30 confirmed dead have been determined, officials have so far released the names of only 26. Other names are expected to be released by the end of the week.

When bodies or remains are found in the mudslide area, crews dig them out and they are flown by helicopter to a nearby landing pad where they are readied to move to the medical examiner's office in Everett, about 30 miles from the scene.

Once there, the bodies are moved to a tented area for decontamination, where they are cleaned in warm water.

From there they are moved to the autopsy room where examiners take fingerprints, look for signs of dental work and identifying marks such as tattoos. When that work is complete, remains are moved to a refrigerated area where they stay until funeral homes make arrangements for burial or cremation.

Campaign on texting, driving is planned

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Drivers know "Click It or Ticket" and "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" as the mantras for national safe-driving programs.

Next up: "U Drive, U Text, U Pay."

Anyone who pays attention knows that drivers routinely ignore state prohibitions against sending text messages and using hand-held cellphones while driving. Those actions lead to an estimated 424,000 roadway deaths and injuries each year, according to federal statistics.

The challenge in combating the deadly trend has been apparent since then-Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood launched a campaign against it several years ago. Historically, few Americans can be made to change their ways through gentle persuasion. They need to be threatened.

The "Buckle Up for Safety" jingle was a popular tune, but a loser for changing habits. Not until "Click It or Ticket," with the threat of consequences, did people begin buckling their seat belts.

Driving "a little tipsy" was commonplace for drivers until Mothers Against Drunk Driving began its victim-baited campaigns and "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" underscored the consequences with sobriety checkpoints and jail terms.

Now, LaHood's successor, Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx, is launching a national television and radio campaign to emphasize that there will be a price paid by those caught sending or receiving text messages while driving.

"We're launching this campaign to change behavior, much like we did with our work on seat belts," Foxx said in announcing the effort. "We want drivers across the board to know that if you drive and you text, you pay, because any second not looking at the road is dangerous."

Study: Blacks, Latinos losing economic ground

By JESSE J. HOLLAND
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Blacks and Latinos are losing economic ground when compared with whites in the areas of employment and income as the United States pulls itself out of the Great Recession, the latest State of Black America report from the National Urban League says.

The annual report, called "One Nation Underemployed: Jobs Rebuild America," noted that the underemployment rate for black workers was 20.5 percent, compared with 18.4 percent for



Morial

Hispanic workers and 11.8 percent for white workers.

Underemployment is defined as those who are jobless or working part-time jobs but desiring full-time work.

The report also said blacks are twice as likely as whites to be unemployed. The unemployment rate for blacks was 12 percent in

February, compared with 5.8 percent for whites.

"Many Americans are being left behind, and that includes African-Americans and Latinos who are being disproportionately left behind by the job creation that we see," National Urban League President Marc Morial said.

Despite the dismal numbers, an analysis by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found blacks significantly more optimistic about their future standard of living than whites, regardless of income level, education or partisanship. Overall, 71 percent of blacks sur-

veyed in the 2012 General Social Survey agreed that they have a good chance of improving their standard of living, outpacing the share among whites by 25 percentage points.

The survey found high optimism even among blacks who say racism is a cause for economic inequality.

Such findings illustrate "a level of optimism in the African-American community and it's important to lift that up," said La June Montgomery Tabron, president and CEO of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which released similar findings in separate research.

New research finds mammogram risks outweigh the potential benefits

By LENNY BERNSTEIN
The Washington Post

Mammography's benefits are substantial, but its potential harms may be greater than previously realized, which should prompt physicians and patients to make decisions about the screening test based on women's individual risks and preferences, researchers concluded in a study released Tuesday.

Lydia Pace and Nancy Keating, both associated with Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, said women should move away from guidelines that call for them

to begin having mammograms at a particular age — 40, in many cases — and be screened at frequent intervals. Instead, they should weigh the benefits and risks of mammography with their physicians and determine their tolerance for the uncertainty that may accompany skipping the exam.

"The take-home for the average woman is, first of all, that there is no right answer about mammography screening," said Pace, a research fellow in global women's health at Brigham and Women's. "The data that we have are not perfect, and they are mixed. But

they do strongly suggest that although mammography does have benefits, it does also have a lot of harms, and those harms are not insubstantial."

In a search of studies that went back to 1960, the researchers determined that for every 10,000 women aged 40 to 49 who receive regular mammograms, five lives would be saved by the discovery of cancers that otherwise would go undetected. For women aged 50 to 59, 10 lives would be saved, and among women 60 to 69, 42 lives would be saved.

The risk of breast cancer, the second-leading cause of cancer

deaths among females, increases as women age. Overall, the screenings are associated with a 19 percent reduction in mortality, the researchers wrote.

At the same time, the cumulative risk of a mammogram resulting in a false positive is about 61 percent for a 40- or 50-year-old woman who has annual mammograms for 10 years. That could result in needless surgery, chemotherapy or radiation.

The analysis, which appeared in the Journal of the American Medical Association, is the latest to cast doubt on the value of mammograms, which account

for \$8 billion in annual health care expenditures in the United States, according to an editorial in the same edition. A study of 90,000 women released in February found that death rates from breast cancer and other causes were the same for women who had mammograms as for those who didn't.

"As a society ... we really, really want to have a way to detect breast cancer early and decrease breast cancer mortality," Pace said. It is "profoundly disappointing that mammography doesn't quite live up to its promise," she added.

WORLD



LUIS HIDALGO/AP

People spend the night at a soccer field after a strong aftershock in Arica, Chile, early Thursday.

Major aftershock spurs new evacuations of Chile's coast

BY LUIS HIDALGO
AND LUIS ANDRÉS HENAO
The Associated Press

QUIQUE, Chile — Coastal residents of Chile's far north spent a second sleepless night outside their homes early Thursday after a major aftershock rattled an area hit a day earlier by a magnitude-8.2 earthquake that caused some damage and six deaths. No new major damage or casualties were reported.

After the magnitude-7.6 aftershock struck just before midnight Wednesday, Chile's Emergency Office and navy issued a tsunami alert and ordered a precautionary evacuation of low-lying areas for the country's whole 2,500-mile Pacific coastline.

Among those moved inland was President Michelle Bachelet, who was in the city of Arica assessing damage in the north from Tues-

day night's powerful quake.

"I was evacuated like all citizens. One can see that the people are prepared," she tweeted early Thursday.

Chile's evacuation order was lifted about 2 a.m. Thursday. The whole coast also was evacuated for several hours after Tuesday's quake, and for the night in the north, although the tsunami proved small.

The aftershock caused buildings to shake and people to run out into the streets in the port of Iquique, which was one of the cities that suffered damage from the Tuesday earthquake. There were no immediate reports of serious damage or injuries from the aftershock, which was one of dozens that have followed the magnitude-8.2 quake.

State television said the aftershock caused some landslides near Alto Hospicio, a poor area

in the hills above Iquique where about 2,500 homes were damaged by Tuesday's earthquake.

The Ministry of Education suspended classes again in schools in the north for Thursday.

The aftershock was felt across the border in southern Peru, where people in the cities of Tacna and Arequipa fled buildings in fear. Police Lt. Freddy Cuelar in Tacna said no damage or injuries were reported. Peru's navy tweeted a tsunami alert for the country's extreme southern coast, which is next to the Chilean region hit by the quakes.

Earlier, authorities reported just six deaths from Tuesday's magnitude-8.2 quake, but didn't rule out the possibility others could have been killed in older structures made of adobe in remote communities that weren't immediately accessible.

Malaysia vows to give plane families closure

BY NICK PERRY
AND EILEEN NG
The Associated Press

PERTH, Australia — Leaders of the two countries heading multinational efforts to solve the mystery of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 pledged Thursday that no effort would be spared to give the families of those on board the answers they need.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak flew to Australia for briefings on the search for the missing plane and talks with his Australian counterpart, Tony Abbott, whose country is overseeing the hunt in a huge and remote patch of the Indian Ocean.

"It is a very difficult search — the most difficult in human history. But as far as Australia is concerned, we are throwing everything we have at it," Abbott said in a media appearance with Najib.

No trace of the Boeing 777 has been found nearly four weeks after it vanished in the early hours of March 8 on a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people on board.

Ten planes and nine ships were involved in search operations Thursday, scouring the ocean far off Australia's southwest corner where investigators believe the plane may have ended up after unknown events occurred on board.

Najib, whose government has been harshly criticized by some victims' families for giving sometimes conflicting information

about the flight and for the slow pace of the investigation, said everyone involved in the search is thinking of the families of victims who are waiting desperately for news.

"I know that until we find the plane, many families cannot start to grieve," Najib said. "I cannot imagine what they are going through. But I can promise them that we will not give up."

"We want to provide comfort to the families and we will not rest until answers are indeed found. In due time, we will provide a closure for this event," he said.

Najib met with Abbott at the Australian base near Perth that is serving as the hub for the multinational search effort. They were briefed by Angus Houston, the head of a joint agency overseeing the search.

Although Australia is coordinating the ocean search, the investigation into the tragedy ultimately remains Malaysia's responsibility. Najib said Australia had agreed to be an "accredited representative in the investigation," and would work with Malaysia on a comprehensive agreement on the search.

On Wednesday, officials warned the investigation may never fully answer why the airliner disappeared. A dearth of information has plagued investigators from the moment the plane's transponders, which make the plane visible to commercial radar, were shut off.

UN: Syrian refugees at 1M mark in Lebanon

BY BARBARA SURK
The Associated Press

TRIPOLI, Lebanon — A teenager from central Syria became the 1 millionth Syrian refugee to register in Lebanon on Thursday, a "devastating milestone" for the tiny Arab country with about 4.5 million people of its own, the U.N. refugee agency said.

Signing up for aid, Yahya, 19, recounted his long ordeal. After being trapped by the fighting for more than two years in his native city of Homs, he was evacuated earlier this year and traveled to Yabroud, a rebel-held town near the Lebanese border that soon came under a crushing government offensive.

When staying there was no longer an option, he crossed into Lebanon with his mother and two sisters on March 5. Yahya's father was not with them — he died from

sniper fire in Homs in September 2011.

On Thursday, Yahya registered at the UNHCR center in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli.

"We didn't know where to go. We just wanted to get away from all the shelling and fighting," he said, giving only his first name for fear that his relatives back in Syria would be targeted.

The conflict in Syria, a country with a prewar population of 23 million, has killed more than 150,000 people, according to the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which documents the fighting through a network of activists on the ground.

The war has uprooted millions of Syrians from their homes, and the U.N. estimates there are now more than 2.5 million Syrians registered in neighboring countries, with more than 47,700 more awaiting registration.

Shark kills woman off Australian beach

The Associated Press

SYDNEY — A large shark killed a woman near her terrified husband and friends as they took their daily morning swim Thursday off a popular Australian east coast beach, police said.

Christine Armstrong, 63, was taken by the shark as she attempted to swim the 1,970 feet between the wharf and beach near the village of Tathra, 210 miles south of Sydney, police said.

The victim was some distance from the other five swimmers, including her husband, Rob Armstrong, when they saw a 10- to 13-foot shark nearby, Police Inspector Jason Edmunds said.

"The group joined up together



Armstrong

and did their best to keep the shark at bay, although it didn't directly attack them," Edmunds told.

Nine Network television.

The swimmers did not see the attack, but a witness on shore did. Edmunds said the species of the shark was unknown.

The Tathra Wharf to Waves — a swim off a rocky coastline from the wharf to the beach and back again — is an annual event that

attracts hundreds of swimmers each summer.

Local council general manager Leanne Barnes said locals meet at the beach every morning to swim out to the wharf and back.

"It's a beautiful, little coastal village and this is one of those sad things that can happen," Barnes said.

Armstrong's family said in a statement that she had been swimming at the beach for 14 years and had been a trainer at the local volunteer lifeguard club.

Police said a helicopter and boat were used to search for Armstrong's remains. The fruitless search was called off late Thursday afternoon.

WORLD

SUPERSIZE ME

Large menus are in order at many restaurants in China

By JULIE MAKINEN
Los Angeles Times

BEIJING — A Peking duck dinner might inspire a twinge of guilt about indulging in some decadent, fatty fowl. But health-conscious diners at the high-end Da Dong restaurant chain here in the Chinese capital can at least rationalize that they did a little weightlifting before their meal.

That's because the menus at Da Dong are heftier than a small gym dumbbell — 5 pounds, 4 ounces, to be exact. Measuring 20 inches tall, 15 inches wide and more than an inch thick, the 140-page menu outweighs National Geographic's Global Atlas.

Packed with rich color photos, the volume is divided into chapters with sumptuous red-and-white calligraphy paper. The brown binding bears the restaurant's name, and a table of contents listing about 200 dishes runs four pages. And diners are handed two other menus: a selection of seasonal items (24 pages) and a wine list (a relatively svelte 19 pages).

Da Dong's massive menu may be among the most eye-popping in town, but it's hardly alone in its heftiness or artistic ambition. Even as a trend toward in-season and locally grown food has helped shrink the list of dishes at many au courant establishments in the United States and Europe in recent years, transforming their bills of fare into single-sheet affairs printed daily on ordinary paper, high-end restaurants in China have been supersizing.

Just why Chinese menus are growing in girth is a complex question rooted in cuisine, culture and commerce.

The Middle Kingdom has great culinary diversity, and whereas Western cooking often relies on time-intensive techniques such as baking and roasting, Chinese cuisine tends to utilize a relatively finite number of ingredients, with chefs producing a multitude of dishes just by switching from boiling to sauteing or using a slightly different sauce. In addition, low labor costs in comparison with the West make it easier to have more cooks in the kitchen.

Family-style ordering feeds a desire for selection, as do cooks eager to cater to diverse parochial palates, from the spicy-loving Sichuanese to the more delicate-dining Shanghaiese. A culture of entertaining, whereby hosts show their generosity by ordering lavishly, also pushes restaurateurs to expand their offerings.

Other less obvious factors over the last 20 years have also helped make menus in China increasingly elaborate. Jen Lin-Liu, author of "On the Noodle Road: From Beijing to Rome



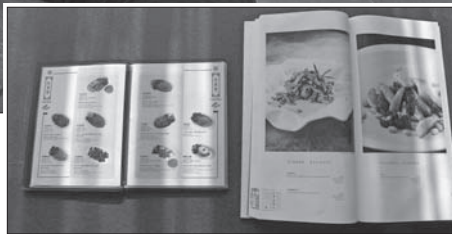
with Love and Pasta" and owner of Black Sesame Kitchen in Beijing, said it's a reflection of China's past poverty mixed with relatively recent economic gains.

"Chinese are able to try all kinds of imported ingredients that weren't available just a little over a decade ago," she said.

Dong Zhenxiang, the chef behind the 600-seat Da Dong, says he started adding photos to his menu in the early 1990s after winning designation from the local government as a "tourist class" restaurant as the nation shed Communist canteens and embraced capitalism.

He found that foreigners as well as Chinese alike appreciated the visual guide.

"Chinese dishes sometimes are very abstract when it comes to their names. Even Chinese people, if they don't know the story behind it, they'll find it hard to understand," he said. "Take, for example, The Dragon and Tiger Fight. It's fish and chicken. But if you don't know that, you don't know what's in it. A picture will show you. Even I, as a professional chef, it's



PHOTOS BY JULIE MAKINEN, LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT

Top, Chef Dong Zhenxiang explains why the menu at Da Dong restaurant in Beijing has grown over the years. Above, a version of his menu from the 1990s is dwarfed by today's tome.

taken me years to realize why some dishes have their names."

As his menu grew more elaborate, Dong found himself in a predicament: Customers were pinching them at a pace that made running his restaurants difficult.

"Ordinary customers and competitors would steal them; they would put them in their bags or under their coats. Waitresses would ask if they had taken them, and they'd just say 'no,' and we couldn't just search them," Dong recalled.

"We need about 200 menus for each restaurant, and we'd get down to 100 and there wouldn't be enough to allow

people to order."

Some restaurateurs might have dealt with the situation by switching to simpler printouts.

But Dong, whose voracious appetite extends from the culinary arts to calligraphy, photography and poetry, was inclined to go big.

Now, his mega-menus are made once a year at a top printing house in Shenzhen, and theft is way down, "though we did have one person come in with a suitcase and manage to get one that way," said Dong, who will occasionally sell last season's menus for \$200 to those who really want to take one home.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Residents: Tear down Adam Lanza's home

CT NEWTOWN — Some Newtown residents say in a new survey that they want the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooter's home torn down and the property turned into a park or nature preserve.

The Newtown-Sandy Hook Community Foundation received more than 1,600 responses to the survey it released Monday on town residents' unmet needs in the wake of the December 2012 shootings. The foundation has been deciding how to distribute more than \$11 million in donations made in response to the shootings, which left 20 first-graders and six educators dead.

Some survey responses said money should be set aside to tear down gunman Adam Lanza's house in Newtown, where he killed his mother before going to the school.

The survey found that counseling and cash assistance services were among families' top priorities.

Town votes down drone-hunting licenses

CO DEER TRAIL — A small town in Colorado won't be issuing hunting licenses to shoot down drones.

Voters in Deer Trail overwhelmingly defeated a proposal Tuesday that would have authorized the rural community east of Denver to issue drone-hunting permits.

Town officials say 73 percent of the 188 votes cast were against the measure.

Deer Trail has 348 registered voters, but officials say many of those are probably inactive.

Federal aviation authorities warned it's a crime to shoot at drones, but backers said the measure was a tongue-in-cheek challenge to surveillance programs.

Some residents called the election a novelty response to show displeasure and raise money through permits.

Lightning strikes planes near airport

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Five airline pilots reported that their planes were struck by lightning as rain fell in the Bay Area, a spokesman for the Federal Aviation Administration said Monday night.

The strikes were reported around San Francisco International Airport during a roughly 30-minute period that began at 12:15 p.m. Monday, said Ian Gregor, FAA spokesman in Los Angeles.

None of the pilots reported damage or requested special assistance, he said. The planes were from Alaska, Horizon, United and United Arab Emirates airlines, the agency said.

Gregor said that FAA certification regulations require planes to withstand "any likely lightning strike" and continue to fly safely and land.

Airlines are also required to have procedures in the maintenance programs for inspec-

THE CENSUS

\$2.2M

the home, Gregory said he will do so and move elsewhere.

The cost of a new mansion the Roman Catholic archbishop of Atlanta had built for himself. Archbishop Wilton Gregory apologized Monday for his decision, which was criticized by local Catholics who cited the example of austerity set by Pope Francis. Gregory said he will discuss the situation with several diocesan councils, including a special meeting of its finance council. If church representatives want the bishop to sell



DAVID GOLDMAN/AP

Swinging in the breeze

Chris Hoag, left, and Parrish Brown, relax in a hammock they put up along the pond in Piedmont Park in Atlanta on Tuesday.

tions after aircraft are struck by lightning.

13 charged in cocaine trafficking ring

WV WHEELING — More than a dozen people have been charged with participating in a cocaine trafficking ring in West Virginia.

Seven people from West Virginia, three from Florida and three from Maryland are charged in a 73-count indictment issued March 18 by a federal grand jury in Martinsburg.

U.S. Attorney William J. Ihlenfeld II announced the indictment on Monday in Wheeling.

The charges include money laundering, conspiracy and distributing a controlled substance near a public college.

Ihlenfeld said the group brought cocaine and crack cocaine to Keyser from other parts of the country to sell.

If convicted, each defendant faces up to life in prison on the conspiracy charge.

The charges stem from an investigation by the Potomac Highlands Drug and Violent Crime Task Force.

Demand up for disaster training center 'city'

KS CRISIS CITY — A mock community in central Kansas that provides training on responding to disasters has been expanding thanks to its popularity with emergency crews.

Crisis City opened in October 2009 southwest of Salina on property owned by the Air Force. It hosts training drills that simulate various catastrophes, such as an active shooter, a train derailment or a building collapse. The various venues at Crisis City are designed to provide law enforcement, emergency medical personnel and military with hands-on training.

Joe Pruitt, program consultant and manager, told The Kansas City Star that Crisis City serves military and civilian personnel

from Kansas and other states, including Missouri, Nebraska and Texas.

The site is expanding to 155 acres, and a new shooting course is already nearly full.

Smithsonian to revise aircraft displays

DC WASHINGTON — Some of the most iconic artifacts of aviation and space history will be getting an updated display for the 21st century, with the Apollo moon landing as the centerpiece.

For the first time since its 1976 opening, the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum plans to overhaul its central exhibition showing the milestones of flight. The extensive renovation announced Thursday will be carried out over the next two years with portions of the exhibit closing temporarily over time, said Museum Director J.R. "Jack" Daley.

The project will be funded by the largest corporate donation

in the Smithsonian's history. On Thursday, Boeing announced a \$30 million gift to the museum for its exhibits and education programs.

Girl, 6, has undergone 16 surgeries for burns

WA KENNEWICK — A Kennewick girl who accidentally set herself on fire while playing with a lighter on the Fourth of July in 2012 has undergone 16 surgeries.

Jadin Filla suffered burns to nearly 50 percent of her body and doctors said she had a 10 percent chance of surviving.

KEPR reported the 6-year-old kindergarten now is running around at school, just like the other kids. She is a miracle to her family and a success story to doctors.

Her surgeries are not over. She's soon scheduled for a procedure in which doctors will fuse a toe onto a hand to serve as a thumb.

From wire reports

WORLD

Air pollution blankets England

The Associated Press

LONDON — Schools have closed their playgrounds and ambulance staff are reporting a surge in breathing problems as smog blankets parts of England for a second day.

Environmentalists criticized Prime Minister David Cameron after he said the haze — a mix of

local pollution, European emissions and Sahara sand — was “a naturally occurring weather phenomenon.”

As air pollution hit the top level of 10 in London and the southeast Thursday, Green Party European lawmaker Keith Taylor said Cameron’s “flippant response to this invisible killer is utterly disgraceful.”

Some schools kept children inside, while the London Ambulance Service said it was seeing a higher-than-normal number of calls from people with breathing difficulties, asthma and heart problems.

The World Health Organization says air pollution kills about 7 million people a year globally.



A view of the building widely known as The Gherkin is shrouded in smog in London's City financial district on Thursday.

LEFTERIS PITRAKIS/AP

Police say synthetics emerging in Asia

The Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Methamphetamine is the drug of choice in Asia but new synthetic drugs have found their way in the region, with authorities always playing catch-up with traffickers, international drug enforcers said Tuesday.

Joseph Reagan, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration regional director for the Far East, said the legal system in many countries could not react fast enough to new psychoactive substances such as synthetic

‘We’re constantly playing catch-up as they change these formulas, and they are very, very destructive for users.’

Joseph Reagan
U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

marijuana and synthetic cathinones, sometimes called bath salts. Once legislatures address the specific substance, traffickers change one chemical molecule to make a drug that is temporarily legal.

Reagan spoke at a regional drug enforcement conference in Manila where representatives from 19 countries are discussing specific investigations and ways to target traffickers.

He said the United States has a significant problem with synthetic drugs, which have also been found in Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines.

In the Philippines, drug traffickers have created Fly High, a mixture of pulverized Ecstasy tablet, crystal meth locally known as shabu, and Viagra. It is sold at \$67 a capsule, said Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency head Arturo Caceda Jr.

“I think they’ve always been around in a certain form, but what the traffickers have realized is that it’s an avenue of success because it’s very difficult to address that issue,” Reagan said. “We’re constantly playing catch-up as they change these formulas, and they are very, very destructive for users,” Reagan said.

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WORLD

Deutsche Lufthansa stands firm on strike

By RICHARD WEISS
Bloomberg News

FRANKFURT, Germany — Deutsche Lufthansa is prepared to ride out the worst disruption in its history, signaling to its pilots that they need to make concessions similar to those of their lower-paid colleagues at the German airline.

Chief Executive Officer Christoph Franz said normal services will only resume Saturday after the three-day strike ends, and that the position between the airline and its pilots remains far apart. Lufthansa has refused to engage in talks while the disruption is in full swing, highlighting its unwillingness to give in with thousands of flights grounded.

"We have been negotiating for a long time," Franz said in a message on YouTube. "We are striving hard that as of Saturday morning, immediately after the strike, a normal service will be provided. I can only apologize for the inconvenience."

The pilots' Vereinigung Cockpit union wants the company to continue paying early retirement benefits for about 5,400 pilots. Lufthansa will cancel about 3,800 flights, or more than 70 percent of scheduled services, during the strike, which comes a week after ground-control workers in Frankfurt



MICHAEL PROBST/AP

A terminal at the Frankfurt airport is empty on the second day of a Lufthansa pilots' strike in Frankfurt, Germany.

furt walked off work demanding higher salaries and one-time payments.

Lufthansa is wrestling with pilots, among the best-paid group of employees, to contribute to a sav-

ings effort designed to lift operating profit to \$3.65 billion by next year. Making pilots contribute is a matter of fairness after ground and cabin staff already made concessions, the carrier has said.

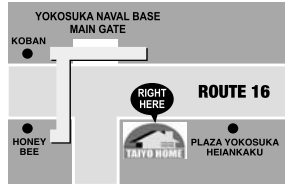
The walkout has started a public debate about compensation, with the most senior pilots at Lufthansa earning as much as 260,000 euros, more than German Chancellor Angela Merkel.



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WORLD

Samsung catches heat over ads

'Breast marketing' strategy nothing new for S. Korean electronics company

By YOUNGYUNG LEE
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — When Samsung unveiled a new smartphone at the storied Radio City Music Hall, the Broadway-style spectacle was memorable not for technology but for a cast of giggling female characters who fantasized about marrying a doctor, fretted about eating too much cake, and needed a man's help to understand how to work the phone.

The stereotypes were blatant even for an industry where skimpy-clad booth babes are a staple of trade shows and high-level female executives are a rarity. A backlash spread online as the event,

live-streamed on the Internet and broadcast in Times Square, unfolded.

How could an international company that wants to be seen as an innovator and spends more than \$11 billion a year on advertising and promotions so badly misjudge its audience? Without too much difficulty and often, it turns out.

A day before the Galaxy smartphone launch in March last year, the company was criticized in South Africa for using models in bikini tops to show its newest refrigerators and washing machines.

Some months later it was derided for a video promoting a fast data storage device known as a

solid state drive. Two men in the ad immediately recognize the device and understand the benefits while a woman, who says she only uses her computer for simple activities such as looking at pictures, is befuddled.

Joking that gadgets made by LG Electronics distract attention from models, Facebook user Lee Sang-hoon collected two dozen images of the company's products promoted by women with ample cleavage. The company's promotion for a new curved TV was a woman showing off her thighs in a reclining pose.

"Among men, we talk about how LG does breast marketing," Lee said.



AP

A model poses with an LG Electronics ultra-HD TV in Seoul, South Korea.

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WORLD

Adultery website is scoring big in Japan

By YURI KAGEYAMA
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Ashley Madison, the world's biggest online hookup site for married people, works only when monogamy is the rule on the surface but, deep inside, couples want to cheat. That's why it is scoring big in Japan.

The nation that prides itself on conformity and proper appearances reached 1 million users in 8½ months, the fastest pace among any of the 37 countries where the adultery site operates. The previous record was Brazil at 10 months. The U.S., which has the biggest number of users at 13 million, took a year to achieve the 1 million mark. Spain took nearly two years.

Extramarital sex and affairs are not new to Japan, but a site such as Ashley Madison is "a leveling out of the playing field" for women, said Noel Biderman, chief executive of Avid Life Media Inc., which operates AshleyMadison.com. There is a tradition of wealthy men taking mistresses in Japan and its male-dominated society has provided plenty of outlets for married men to find casual sex.

The divorce rate in Japan is relatively low at about two cases per 1,000 people vs. four cases in the U.S., although sinking marriage rates in Japan also lower the divorce numbers. In the 1960s, divorces

were even rarer, with fewer than one per 1,000 people.

With its slogan, "Life is short. Have an affair," Ashley Madison has drawn nearly 25 million users worldwide since being started in Canada in 2002. It now has 1.07 million users in Japan after opening here in June last year.

Biderman, who is in a monogamous marriage and has two children, insists the social network is just a tool and no one can force anyone to betray a spouse. A friendly, uninhibited man with quick answers to almost any question about infidelity, he doesn't shy from declaring he would cheat if his marriage were sexually unsatisfying.

One appeal of the site is that it allows for pseudonyms or anonymity. It's secure and closed so digital tracks like emails don't get left behind, reducing the chances of getting caught. It's far less messy than trying to find an erotic outlet on Facebook or in the office, Biderman said during a visit to Tokyo.

A small but significant portion of users around the world don't have affairs and merely flirt in "fantasy dates" in cyberspace, according to Ashley Madison.

Singles can join but only if they are willing to get together with married people. Women can use the services for free.

Revenue comes from charging the male



EUGENE HOSHINO/AP

Noel Biderman, chief executive of Avid Life Media Inc. — which operates AshleyMadison.com., an online hookup site for married people — speaks Tuesday in Tokyo.

users, who are 64 percent of site's members in Japan and 70 percent globally. A package of 100 credits costs 4,900 yen (\$49), which allows connections with 20 potential partners. Credits are also used for gifts to woo potential lovers, such as virtual flowers. The privately owned company had profit of about \$40 million last year. Its revenue was about \$125 million, up from \$100 million in 2012.

Ashley Madison has not been warmly welcomed everywhere in Asia.

Singapore's government blocked access to the site ahead of its launch there late last year amid a public outcry, lambasting the service as a "flagrant disregard of our family values and public morality."

The nation that invented the geisha,

Japan is no newcomer to the cheating game.

It already has a host of online encounter sites called "deaikei," which means "meeting people." "Soap land" is a real place, where scantily clad women give massages and more. "Love hotels," the official place for secret flings, are a booming business.

Nobuyuki Hayashi, a technology consultant and writer, is not surprised Ashley Madison is a hit. Japanese have little resistance to engaging in hanky-panky with strangers, and have relied on cellphone and other social networking technology to hook up, he said.

And with the long "salaryman" hours typically in corporate Japan, immediate gratification becomes crucial, he said.

Chinese actor's apology to wife breaks Web record

By LOUISE WATT
The Associated Press

BEIJING — A Chinese actor's apology to his actress wife following rumors of his infidelity has set a record for comments and retweets on China's version of Twitter.

The scandal surrounding film and TV star Wen Zhang has resounded among Chinese partly because of his image as a sensitive and happily married family man, and the volume of comments underlines the relative freedom users have to focus on entertainment news online where politics is often off-limits.

Wen Zhang posted a statement early Monday that his wife, Ma Yili, "and the children could have had a warm and nice life, but everything was destroyed by me." By Wednesday, his post had been forwarded more than 1.2 million times and received nearly 1.9



Chinese actor Wen Zhang, left, attends an event in 2012 with wife Ma Yili and a child actor.

million comments. Many comments expressed anger toward Wen, who has more than 52 mil-

lion followers.

The topic trended above the missing Malaysian plane and a protest against a petrochemical plant in Maoming that turned violent. Censors had blocked searches relating to the Maoming protests.

Extramarital affairs are not as taboo in China as they once were, and sex scandals provide an outlet for relatively free commentary by ordinary people online, said Zhan Jiang, a journalism professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University. Unlike political news, "entertainment news isn't restricted or censored by the authorities," Zhan said. "From the authorities' point of view, it isn't good if the public cares too much about politics, but entertainment is safe."

Sina Weibo said on its site Monday evening that the vast majority of people discussing Wen's post were educated women and girls 24 and younger.

Wen's tweet broke a record set by pop singer Faye Wong in September when she announced via Sina Weibo that she was getting a divorce.

However, it was still far behind the record 3.4 million retweets on

Twitter garnered by American chat show host Ellen DeGeneres with her selfie at the Oscars in March with stars including Bradley Cooper, Jennifer Lawrence, Brad Pitt, Julia Roberts, Meryl Streep and Kevin Spacey.

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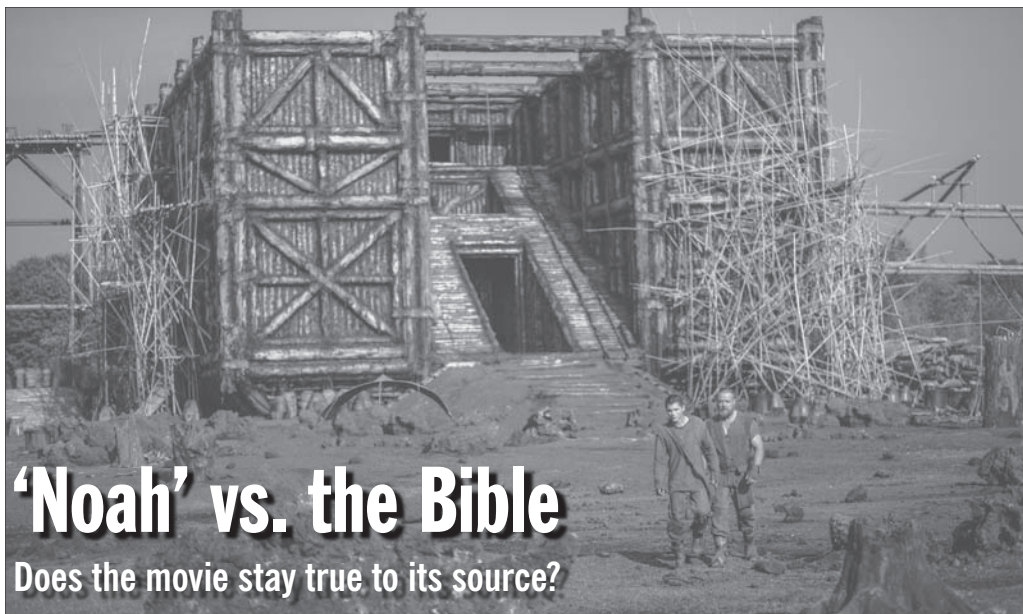
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FAITH



'Noah' vs. the Bible

Does the movie stay true to its source?

By MIRIAM KRULE
Slate

Back in February, the Hollywood Reporter documented some of the controversy surrounding Darren Aronofsky's "Noah," which opened last Friday in the States. As with any work of art based on the Bible, the studio was concerned that religious viewers would question its faithfulness to its source. But Aronofsky has been clear that he intends for the film to appeal to believers of all faiths as well as nonbelievers.

He told the Reporter that he wanted to create "this fantastical world, a Middle-earth that they wouldn't expect from their grandmother's Bible school."

How much of Noah is based on the text as it appears in the Old Testament?

BEFORE THE FLOOD Like the Bible itself, the movie begins its story at the very beginning. At one point Noah tells his children the story of creation and broadly stays true to Genesis, though he conflates the second and fourth days: The Bible tells us that the greater and lesser lights (commonly accepted to be the sun and moon) were created on the fourth day, not the second.

When it comes to the current state of the land, the movie sets up two factions: Lemeh and Noah, the good men, and Tubal-Cain and his people, the "evil" men. The evil men are descendants of Cain, which is in line with what the Bible states in Chapter 3: According to that chapter, Cain moved eastward and built cities and had children.

ZOHAR The evil men have mined the land for "zohar." This element looks like gold and has essentially magical powers — it's used to make light and, later, for a sort of antediluvian pregnancy test. Zohar is not mentioned in the story of Noah, but the Hebrew word does appear later in the Old Testament in Ezekiel and Daniel and is commonly translated to refer to a light of some sort. It's also the name of the foundational text of Kabbalah, something Aronofsky has used before, most prominently in "Pi."

METHUSELAH In the movie, Methuselah,



PHOTOS BY NIKO TAVERNISE, PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

Above: From left, Russell Crowe as Noah, Anthony Hopkins as Methuselah and Gavin Casalegno as Young Shem in a scene from "Noah." **Top:** Crowe and Logan Lerman, left, who plays Noah's son Ham, walk away from the ark in a scene.

Noah's grandfather, lives alone on the top of a mountain and has a constant craving for berries. He also keeps hallucinogens and has some mystical powers — including the ability to repair reproductive organs. He dies during the flood. Not much is said about him in the Bible, though he is the oldest documented person mentioned in the book. (After the flood, God proclaims that man won't live more than 120 years.) Doing some math using the genealogy the Bible gives us, it makes perfect sense that Methuselah would have died in the flood: As the Bible tells it, he was 187 when Lemeh was born and Lemeh was 182 when Noah was born. Noah was 600 when the flood came, the Bible says, which would make Methuselah 969, the same age that the Bible claims he was when he died. The Bible says nothing about an obsession with berries.

LEMEH Like his father Methuselah, Lemeh, Noah's father, is mentioned in the Bible only for the purpose of documenting the genealogy from Adam to Noah. The movie not only takes liberties to flesh out his character, apparently inventing some sort of birth-right ritual involving snakeskin (we could

find no evidence of this in the Bible), but it has him killed by Tubal-Cain when Noah is just a teen. According to the Bible, Noah was no teen when his father died; he was 595.

TUBAL-CAIN The character of Tubal-Cain, the movie's lead villain, is almost entirely invented. In the Bible, there is a descendant of Cain named Tubal-Cain who is described as "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron." However, it's unclear in the Bible if Tubal-Cain even lives in the time of Noah, and there is definitely no mention of any stowaways on the ark.

NOAH'S WIFE In the movie, Noah's wife is named Naamah and could be seen as almost an equal to Noah. In the Bible, like all the women in this story, she is simply referred to as Noah's wife and all we know is that she was on the ark. Oddly though, Tubal-Cain's sister in the Bible is named Naamah, though we know nothing else about her and it's not clear that she was alive when Noah was.

NA'AM The entire character of Na'el, the woman that Noah makes Ham leave behind, does not appear in the Bible. According to the Bible, Ham's wife was on the ark.

WATCHERS The movie introduces the characters of Watchers — CGI stone giants that do God's bidding. While there are no rock monsters in the Bible, the section right before the flood does say, "There were giants in the earth in those days."

THE FLOOD In the movie, Noah finds out about the flood because of two slightly confusing prophetic dreams, both of which find him submerged in water. In the Bible, it's much more straightforward, and God simply tells him what's happening. God gives Noah specific directions and dimensions and Noah builds the ark. While in the movie Methuselah gives Noah a seed from Eden to plant — which overnight turns into a forest that provides all the material for the ark — in the Bible there is no reference to where Noah gets all the wood.

Everything with Tubal-Cain and his people attempting to board the ark is also invented for the movie. In addition, in the Bible, there is little information about what happens on the ark. We are only told the chronology — with days and months — and that, just as in the movie, they landed on a mountain. In terms of knowing when to descend the ark, the movie has Japheth sending out a raven — which returns — and a dove that comes back with an olive leaf. In the Bible, the dove is sent out three times. The first time it returns, the second time it comes back with an olive leaf, and the third time it doesn't return.

NOAH'S DRUNKENNESS After the flood, we see Noah separated from his family and, in despair, getting hammered. In the Bible, Noah gets hammered, too, though it's not clear why. The Bible also leaves some ambiguity as to what happens while Noah is passed out naked. We find out that "Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him." What exactly the younger son (presumably Ham) did is unclear — in the Bible, seeing someone's nakedness is often translated to mean having sex and there are some who interpret this to mean that Ham sodomized his father — but Noah curses Ham's descendants because of it, saying they will be servants to Shem and Japheth's descendants.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Amazon unveils Fire TV set-top device

BY MAE ANDERSON
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Amazon is making a bid to enter living rooms with Amazon Fire TV, a new set-top box that allows streaming of online video, music and other content to televisions.

The company says the \$99 device has better speed, performance and search functions than other streaming boxes such as Apple TV and Google Chrome-

cast. But Amazon is coming late to the streaming set-top game, and it remains to be seen whether the company is offering enough new and better services to lure customers away from their current streaming methods.

The device, about the size of a CD case, runs Google's Android operating system and offers Netflix, Hulu and other streaming channels in addition to Amazon Prime instant video. It comes with a Bluetooth remote, which lets

users search for video by talking to the remote. Customers will get a free 30-day trial subscription to Netflix and Amazon Prime when they buy a Fire TV.

Amazon Vice President Peter Larsen said the retailer sells millions of streaming media devices each year, and its own box is an effort to address three complaints it commonly hears from customers: Search is too clunky, there is not an open ecosystem that allows people to use several

different streaming systems and performance isn't good enough.

Fire TV also offers a range of other services, including music channels like Pandora and "Free Time," a customizable interface for children.

The box, which started shipping this week, will also feature thousands of free and paid games like Minecraft and Disney Pixar's Monsters University starting next month. Games can be played using the remote.

EUROPE GAS PRICES

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Netherlands	--	\$4.731	\$5.038	\$4.999
Change in price	--	+8.5 cents	+8.5 cents	-1.3 cents
U.K.	--	\$3.915	\$4.076	\$4.147
Change in price	--	+2.7 cents	+2.8 cents	-1.3 cents
Azores	--	--	\$4.482	--
Change in price	--	--	no change	--
Belgium	--	\$3.851	\$4.164	\$4.190
Change in price	--	-7.8 cents	+10.5 cents	-7.6 cents
Turkey	--	--	\$4.445	\$4.080*
Change in price	--	--	no change	-1.3 cents
Italy	\$3.936	--	--	\$4.239
Change in price	+3.1 cents	--	--	no change

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
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Okinawa	\$3.569	--	--	\$3.969
Change in price	+3.0 cents	--	--	-1.0 cents
South Korea	\$3.829	--	\$4.159	\$4.219
Change in price	+3.0 cents	--	+3.0 cents	-1.0 cents
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EXCHANGE RATES

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Euro costs (April 4)	\$1.4130
Dollar buys (April 4)	\$60.7077
China Yuan (April 4)	16.2605
Japanese yen (April 4)	101.00
South Korean won (April 4)	1,032.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769
British pound	\$1.6586 (0.6029)
Canada (Dollar)	0.1020
China Yuan	6.2105
Denmark (Krone)	5.4446
Egypt (Pound)	0.9775
France (Franc)	\$1.3711 (7.2594)
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7571
Hungary (Forint)	273.82
Israel (Shekel)	0.2820
Japan (Yen)	104.04
Kuwait (Dinar)	3.4741
Norway (Krone)	5.9977
Philippines (Peso)	45.62
Poland (Zloty)	3.04
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	0.3716
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2640
South Korea (Won)	1,029.88
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9316
Thailand (Baht)	0.2947

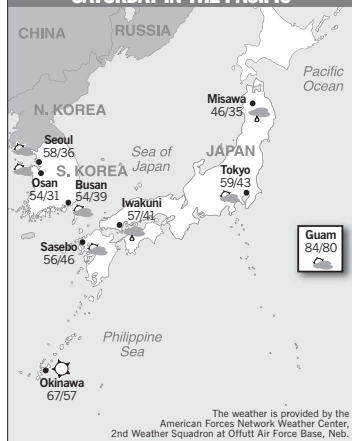
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INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Discount rate	0.75
Federal funds market rate	0.08
3-month bill	0.05
20-year bond	3.65

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

**FRIDAY IN EUROPE****SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC**

The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

Friday's US temperatures

[illegible]

WEEKEND



'Dark Souls II' bigger, but not better

Page 37



Traveling for laughs

Tokyo Comedy Store events specialize in standup, improv

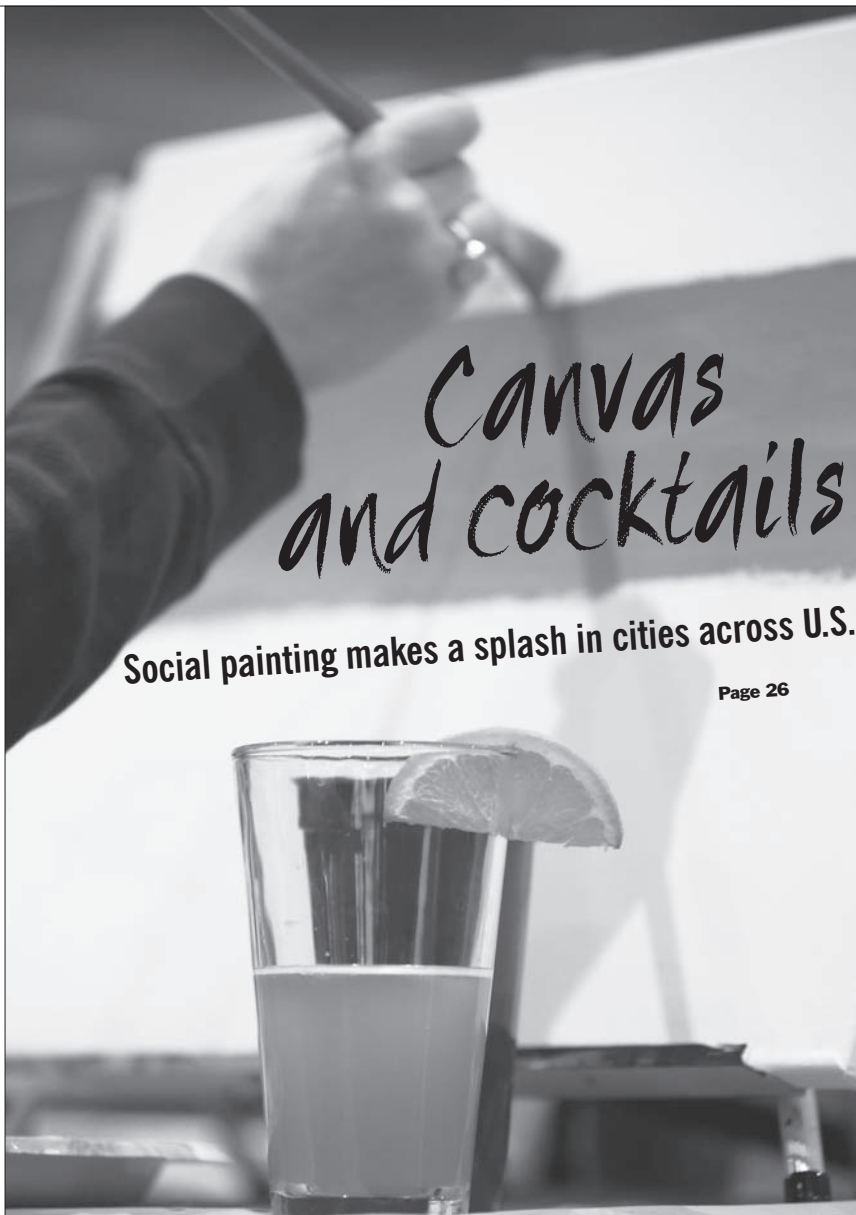
After Hours, Page 36



Eggcellent artwork

Museum in Sonnenbühl, Germany, displays eggs from around the world

Travel, Page 30



Social painting makes a splash in cities across U.S.

Page 26

WEEKEND: GADGETS & CHARTS

Apply spring cleaning to social media as well

By SCOTT KLEINBERG
Chicago Tribune

I don't believe you should wait for spring to clean up your social media, but it's as good a time as any.

Passwords. Comments. Privacy. Good social media means staying on top of all of these things across all of your accounts. Resolve to take better care of your social media starting today with these spring cleaning tips. Once you've completed them, your accounts will shine as though they were just started yesterday.

• **Clean up your password.** Social media accounts, from the ones you use every day to the ones you hardly use, should have secure passwords. Different passwords for each platform. No birthdays, no addresses and no trace of your ZIP code. And please, whatever you do, don't use your ATM pin.

• **Clean up your comments.** There's this rash of spam on Facebook where so-and-so's Aunt Matilda made \$83 just for going to a certain link. No one cares about Aunt Matilda, but you should care about how these posts look on your social media accounts. Don't leave them there. Delete. Hover over the right side of the comment you want to remove until the "x" appears. Click and you'll instantly feel better. And cleaner.

• **Clean up your privacy.** In keeping with the spring cleaning theme, privacy is like the dirt between the bathroom tiles — you never realize how much there is until you get in there and scrub. The good thing is, scrub once and it will stay clean for a while. Rather than focus on one general area, I advise logging into each platform, go to the settings menu and make sure everything is how you want it. There's nothing under



these menus that's hard to understand, it's just a lot to navigate — especially where Facebook is concerned.

• **Clean up your followers and friends.** It's typical to just hit the "add friend" or "follow" button without giving much thought who you're following. You should be more in control of that, though, because quality friendships matter in social media.

• **Clean up your avatars.** Your avatar — the face associated with your account — says a lot about you. For example, people who don't add avatars to Twitter and with the generic egg are called Twitter eggs. They are often associated with people who are lazy and spammy. Don't be an egg. Make sure every account has a good avatar that best showcases you and your brand. You can use the same one for all your social media or pick and choose. Just choose something.

And there you go. You can probably accomplish most of this in an hour or so. Put on some good tunes, grab a snack and start cleaning.

Next up: Your closets. Sorry, that will probably take more than an hour.

ON THE COVER: A Paint Nite participant works on a sunset during an event at a sports bar in Philadelphia. Many similar events across the U.S. encourage folks to relax, sip and get a two-hour painting session.

MATT SLOCUM/AP

GADGET WATCH



ADVA Soft/MCT

The Handy Photo 2.0 is an all-encompassing photo editing app for iOS and Android devices.

Activity monitor, phone app get thumbs-up

By GREGG ELLMAN
McClatchy-Tribune News Service

My friends helped me to test this week's gadgets.

The new activity monitor from Shine is a wearable device that is as accurate as can be for tracking activity, sleep and calories.

It looks cool and can be worn several ways. I suspect the most popular will be attaching it to a shoe or clothing with a magnetic clip. Other options include a sportband that makes it look like a wristwatch.

My wife agreed to test the activity monitor on her active lifestyle, which includes teaching high school, freelance photography and frequent trips to the gym.

She mainly used the device attached to her shoe or with the sportband on her wrist.

The device works with the Shine app (iOS and Android). Just set your height, weight and desired activity level, and it calculates your points.

Within the app, you tap on the points to see steps taken, calories burned throughout the day and miles walked.

She compared the amount of calories burned and miles walked to what her treadmill said and found it to be accurate. The calories burned is based on your basal metabolic rate plus your activity, so the Shine will tell you the total number

of calories you burn in a day, not just the activities' calories. It monitors your sleep as well, and you can connect online through the app with others using the device.

She liked the device overall, but after wearing the sportband, she said it felt weird to have two watches on one arm and looked silly to have them on two. It does have a way to tell time, but it's not easy to access that function.

Online: misfitwearables.com; The Shine is \$119.95. Necklace or leather bands are \$49.95

The Handy Photo 2.0 app by ADVA Soft — which is an all-encompassing photo editing app for iOS and Android handheld devices — also got a trial from a friend.

Handy Photo has more features than most photo apps out there. It edits images up to 36 megapixels and supports JPG and RAW file formats.

The interface is easy to use. Either take or open a photo from your camera roll and tap the upper right corner of your screen for the different editing functions. Options are tone and color, retouch, clone stamp, move me, filters, textures, magic crop and frames.

The "move me" function allows you to select one part of a photo and move it within the photo or even to another photo.

Online: adva-soft.com; available at iTunes and Google Play stores at \$1.99

ITUNES MUSIC

Top 10 songs on the iTunes Store for April 1:

1. "Happy" (from "Despicable Me 2"), Pharrell Williams
2. "All of Me," John Legend
3. "Let It Go," Idina Menzel
4. "Dark Horse," Katy Perry (feat. Juicy J)
5. "Talk Dirty," Jason Derulo (feat. 2 Chainz)
6. "The Man," Aloe Blacc
7. "Pompeii," Bastille
8. "SELFIE," The Chainsmokers
9. "Turn Down for What," DJ Snake & Lil Jon
10. "This Is How We Roll," Florida Georgia Line (feat. Luke Bryan)

— Compiled by MCT

SPOTIFY MUSIC

The top streamed tracks on Spotify from March 24-30:

1. Katy Perry, "Dark Horse"
2. John Legend, "All of Me"
3. Jason Derulo, "Talk Dirty" — feat. 2 Chainz
4. Bastille, "Pompeii"
5. Various Artists, "Let It Go"
6. Aloe Blacc, "The Man"
7. Beyoncé, "Drunk In Love"
8. The Chainsmokers, "#SELFIE — Original Mix"
9. Lorde, "Team"
10. Pharrell Williams, "Happy (from Despicable Me 2)"

— Compiled by The Associated Press

ITUNES MOVIES

Top 10 movies downloaded from the iTunes Store for April 1:

1. "Frozen"
2. "American Hustle"
3. "Saving Mr. Banks"
4. "The Wolf of Wall Street"
5. "The Hunger Games: Catching Fire"
6. "A.C.O.D."
7. "12 Years a Slave"
8. "Dallas Buyers Club"
9. "Gravity"
10. "Veronica Mars"

— Compiled by MCT

VIDEO GAMES

The editors of Game Informer rank the Top 10 games for April:

1. "Dark Souls II," PS3, 360, PC
2. "Titanfall," Xbox One, PC
3. "Hearthstone," PC
4. "Smite," PC
5. "Towerfall: Ascension," PS4, PC
6. "South Park: The Stick of Truth," PS3, 360, PC
7. "Shadowrun: Dragonfall," PC
8. "Luftrausers," PS3, Vita, PC
9. "The Walking Dead Season 2, Episode 2: A House Divided," PS3, 360, iOS
10. "Mercenary Kings," PS4, PC

— Compiled by MCT

APPS

Top 5 new free apps for April 1:

ANDROID

1. Smash Hit
2. Bingo by IGG
3. God of Light
4. Slots Fairytale: FREE SLOTS
5. Clash of Lords 2

Top 5 free apps for April 1:

APPLE

1. Microsoft Word for iPad
2. Microsoft Excel for iPad
3. Microsoft PowerPoint for iPad
4. Boom Beach
5. Microsoft OneNote for iPad

— Compiled by MCT

WEEKEND

CHECK IT OUT

Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time

1

See the original rain man as 'Noah' hits theaters

Say what you will about Russell Crowe's personal life, but onscreen, the man can make us feel empathy for just about anyone. The same is true for his role as Noah. The movie is getting some backlash from those who aren't pleased with the liberties director Darren Aronofsky took with the original Bible story. Whether you think the story of Noah is an accurate depiction of ancient history or just a fanciful tale, the movie is worth your time. All 138 well-acted, special effects-filled minutes of it.

- **Movie review of "Noah" on Page 25**
- **Profile of director Darren Aronofsky on Page 24**



PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

Russell Crowe does some of his finest acting to date as the title character in "Noah," now playing in many theaters overseas.

2

YES! YES! YES!: WrestleMania 30 on AFN

WrestleMania takes its body-crunching action to New Orleans for the first time. This year, the WWE's flagship event includes the 30-man Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal; John Cena vs. Bray Wyatt; Brock Lesnar vs. The Undertaker; and Daniel Bryan vs. Triple H.

- **WrestleMania 30 airs on AFN-Xtra on April 8**

- **Online: www.com/shows/wrestlemania**



3

5 essential 'HIMYM' music moments

Say what you will about the way "How I Met Your Mother" wrapped up its series last week, but there's no denying that the sitcom was music-minded. Its theme songs, pop-star guests and original tunes are evidence, but "HIMYM" was also brilliant at matching great scenes with appropriate songs.

- **Five of the best: tinyurl.com/qd8bxd**



4

Foster the People offers up second album

The band known for its surprise hit "Pumped Up Kicks" looked to the world for inspiration for their sophomore album. Mark Foster mined the sounds and experiences of Africa and the Middle East for the band's follow-up, "Supermodel."

- **Profile of band, album review on Page 38**



WEEKEND: MOVIES

Epic journey to theaters

Director Darren Aronofsky floats a fuller version of the Bible's Noah tale

By JOHN HORN
Los Angeles Times

It was easy to get lost on Darren Aronofsky's ark. Inside a converted Brooklyn armory in late 2012, Aronofsky was shooting "Noah" on a massive vessel that matched the biblical dimensions of the boat, its rough beams lashed together and the hull sealed with pitch. In every corner of the three-story structure rested packs of ersatz animals — insects on one level, snakes and turtles in another corner and, around the bend, lions quite literally lying with lambs. "Animals are fragile. Please do not touch," a sign warned visitors.

It took production designer Mark Friedberg's team four months to construct the interior ark set for "Noah" (he built another, for exterior shots, near Long Island Sound) and much longer for Industrial Light and Magic and Look Effects to create living, albeit digital, creatures that would walk, fly and slither, two by two, into the ark.

Yet those tasks were ultimately footnotes in the film's epic journey to the screen, as Aronofsky and screenwriter Ari Handel labored to expand a brief but revered story into a full-length movie, all without estranging their financiers and the faithful, both of whom worried that "Noah" would be heretical.

The \$130-million production marks a departure not only for Aronofsky, whose previous films, including "Black Swan" and "The Wrestler," were more modest undertakings, but also for Hollywood itself, which in recent decades has exhibited negligible interest in overtly religious stories. The few scriptural hits, including Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" and the new "Son of God," were produced independently.

If "Noah" attracts a torrent of moviegoers, and early box-office results suggest it will (nearly \$44 million for its opening weekend in the States), the film could bolster the prospects for the industry's unusually large religious slate, a roster that includes "Heaven Is for Real," "Exodus," "Last Days in the Desert" and "Mary."

But first, Aronofsky's movie has to prove its doubters wrong.

"Once people start seeing the film, believers and nonbelievers will all be able to have conversations about it that I believe will be interesting," an exhausted but positive Aronofsky said after "Noah" had its world premiere in Mexico City. "But you have to go into the film recognizing that your expectations are going to be rattled."

Only 15 years ago, as Aronofsky's experimental sci-fi story "Pi" was about to hit theaters, the filmmaker visited the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Culver City, Calif. Dedicated to the Earth's history, the fanciful and scientifically creative museum was displaying a small diorama based on Noah's ark.

Aronofsky easily could have walked past it, but the exhibit caught his eye — and imagination.

"It was a cool little sculpture," the 45-year-old Aronofsky recalled. "And I said to myself, 'It's strange that the biblical epic has been dead for 50 years.' This was clearly a true genre with some



NIKO TAVERNISE, PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

Darren Aronofsky, left, and actor Russell Crowe on the set of Aronofsky's \$130 million production, "Noah."

of the biggest movies ever made. But at the time the Old Testament hadn't been touched in years."

Soon thereafter, he successfully pitched his flood idea to producer Lynda Obst, but when a Jon Voight television miniseries called "Noah's Ark" came out — complete with an attack on the prophet from a "Waterworld"-like pirate ship — Aronofsky's "Noah" ran aground before he could even write it.

By 2003, after the filmmaker's "Requiem for a Dream" was completed, Aronofsky began working with screenwriter Ari Handel (a college classmate and former neuroscientist) on a "Noah" script. But it was not until after the director's long-delayed "The Fountain" was released in 2006 that Aronofsky started taking the story around town.

It didn't start well. "Noah" briefly was set up at Universal but lost momentum when studio chief Stacey Snider departed and Universal's "Evan Almighty," a \$175-million Steve Carrell comedy set

on an ark, bombed in 2007. Rather than watch their screenplay perish, Aronofsky and Handel turned to Canadian comic book artist Niko Henrichon, who in 2008 began a painstaking effort to transform their script into a series of graphic novels (initially in French but now compiled into one English-language volume).

When Aronofsky's "Black Swan" became a commercial hit with more than \$329 million in worldwide ticket sales and an Oscar winner for actress Natalie Portman, "Noah" suddenly had fresh energy. In early 2011, producer Arnon Milchan's Regency Enterprises agreed to share equally in financing the production with Paramount Pictures. Russell Crowe was cast as Noah, with Jennifer Connelly playing his wife, Naameh, and Logan Lerman (Ham), Douglas Booth (Shem) and Leo McHugh Carroll (Japheth) as their sons.

To help dramatize how mankind had fallen, Aronofsky cast the Earth as a character, using exteriors in Iceland to show the planet as barren. The world, and everything in it, was in need of new stewardship, and that environmental message resonated — in mostly the wrong way — with conservative critics. The deluge of doubters ultimately included his own studio.

The film's physical production wasn't particularly smooth. In late 2012, Hurricane Sandy briefly shut down production, with the homes of some New York crew — including producer Scott Franklin — directly in the storm's path. "It brought us together," Franklin said, "to go through something like that."

The real trouble was on the horizon, when Paramount grew anxious that "Noah" might offend some of the religious right and started testing its own cut of the movie while Aronofsky raced to finish his. Franklin said that even with unfinished visual effects and a rough score, Aronofsky's version tested better than Paramount's, even though the studio had few fewer missing pieces and was more polished.

Even so, Paramount again blindsided its filmmakers by agreeing in late February to add a disclaimer to "Noah's" marketing materials without giving Aronofsky a heads-up.

The move came after several Christian groups, including the National Religious Broadcasters, objected to how Aronofsky was interpreting scripture.

"Once people start seeing the film, believers and nonbelievers will all be able to have conversations about it that I believe will be interesting."

Darren Aronofsky



WEEKEND: MOVIES



PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

Russell Crowe adds moral left to his titular character, which grounds the film and excuses some moments of silliness in "Noah."

'Noah' never dull

Crowe's acting, special effects buoy Biblical tale

By JOCELYN NOVECK
The Associated Press

What to make of Darren Aronofsky's "Noah"? Perhaps that's the wrong question. Indeed, what NOT to make of "Noah"? Because it is so many things.

It is, of course, a biblical blockbuster, a 21st-century answer to Cecil B. DeMille. It's also a disaster movie — the original disaster, you might say. It's an intense family drama. Part sci-fi film. An action flick? Definitely, along the lines of "The Lord of the Rings." At times you might also think of "Transformers," and even "The Shining."

But there's one thing "Noah" is not, for a moment: Dull. It's a movie that, with all its occasional excess, is utterly worth your time — all 138 minutes of it.

Although the real star of the film is its visual ingenuity, one must give ample credit to Russell Crowe, who lends Noah the moral heft and groundedness we need to believe everything that ends up happening to him. Noah's near-descent into madness would not be nearly as effective had Crowe not already convinced us of his essential decency. At the same time, the actor is believable when pondering the most heinous crime imaginable. It's one of Crowe's more effective performances.

It wouldn't have been possible, though, without considerable liberties taken by Aronofsky and his co-screenwriter, Ari Handel, in framing Noah's story. There's

New on base

"Noah" is playing at the following military facilities:

Europe

Mildenhall, Ansbach, Baumholder, Grafenwöhr, Hohenfels, Ramstein, Spangdahlem, Stuttgart, Vilseck, Wiesbaden, Aviano, Sigonella and Vicenza.

Pacific

Showboat, Village, Benny Decker, Fleet, Negishi, Yokota, Zama, Foster, Futenma, Hansen, Kadena, Kinser, Schwab, Courtney, Yongsan South Post No. 1, Casey, Henry, Kunsan and Osan.

Online: noahmovie.com

been controversy here, but if you glance at the Bible, you'll see why liberties are necessary: the story takes up only a few passages, hardly enough for a feature-length script.

But there's a serious backdrop: Man's wickedness, and God's desire to purge the Earth of that wickedness. Aronofsky dives headlong into this story of good vs. evil, not only between men, but within one man's soul.

We meet Noah and his family as they're attempting to live peacefully, and ward off the greedy, violent descendants of Cain. Noah has three sons and a wife, Naameh (Jennifer Connelly, lively, genuine and appealing). Along the way they pick up Ila, an injured young girl who will

grow to love Noah's son Shem (an invented character, played with sensitivity by Emma Watson).

Noah visits his grandfather, Methuselah, embodied with scene-stealing vigor by Anthony Hopkins. The old man — and by the way, this is relative, because Noah himself is already more than 500 years old, according to the Bible — helps him induce a hallucination, which brings a vision. The Creator will destroy the Earth in a great flood. Noah's job, of course, is to build that ark.

It's a monumental task, but Noah has help: the Watchers, huge, lumbering creatures made of rock.

But it's here that the movie courts ridicule. These creatures look a little too much like Transformers, and detract from the mystical feel of the film. A giggle is surely not what the director was going for here.

The ark itself is a wondrous thing — constructed according to measurements specified in Genesis, and finished up digitally.

Also stunning: the flood itself, more chilling than any you've seen in a disaster flick.

But for sheer cinematic beauty, it's hard to beat the dreamlike sequence in which Aronofsky illustrates the story of creation, as recounted by Noah. At this moment, you might well forgive any excesses in the film. Like his flawed hero, Aronofsky has a vision — a cinematic one — and the results, if not perfect, are pretty darn compelling.

"Noah" is rated PG-13 for "violence, disturbing images and brief suggestive content." Running time: 138 minutes.

Schwarzenegger, 'Sabotage' script compete for worst place

By ROGER MOORE

McClatchy-Tribune News Service

Arnold Schwarzenegger doesn't strut through action films these days. And no amount of editing can hide that, no, grandpa can't kick doors down any more. Or even fake it.

His line-readings also have a fatigue that suggests he's kind of over it.

"Aye, trust you milt my life! Ve are still a family!"

A once-bulky big boy of Hollywood's steroid era, these days he just lumbers into scenes, chomping a cigar, and tries to let the younger, bigger actors carry the load.

Especially in "Sabotage," a stupidly titled actioner that, like its star, lumbers along between shootouts, gory crime scenes and glib, off-color one-liners. This dark turn in the Arnie oeuvre is by the guy who did "Training Day" and "End of Watch." But watching this head-slappingly stupid movie is an exercise in seeing director David Ayer sucked into the drain that Arnold's been spiraling down ever since his "comeback."

Schwarzenegger plays John "Breacher" Wharton, the head of a DEA Special Opera-

New on base

"Sabotage" is playing at the following:

Europe

Mildenhall, Ansbach, Baumholder, Grafenwöhr, Hohenfels, Ramstein, Spangdahlem, Stuttgart, Vilseck, Wiesbaden, Aviano and Vicenza.

Pacific

Kadena, Zama, Foster, Futenma, Hansen, Kadena, Kinser, Schwab, Courtney, Yongsan South Post Nos. 1 and 2, Casey, Henry, Kunsan and Osan.

Online: sabotagethefilm.com

tions Team, a gang of buff thugs with big guns and cude nicknames that they trot out in every slow-footed operation they mount. When we meet Breacher, "Monster" (Sam Worthington) and his macho wife, Lizzy (Mireille Enos), "Sugar" (Terrence Howard) and "Grinder" (Joe Manganiello), along with "Tripod," "Neck," "Pryor" and "Smoke," they're shooting their way into an Atlanta mansion run by a drug lord. And they're robbing him.

They stash the cash, but it disappears. Their bosses know there's missing money. A long investigation (lots of grainy interrogation video) later, nobody's charged. They get off with a scolding: "The only thing anybody in law enforcement has is their credibility."

That'll teach 'em. But then, the members of the team start meeting gruesome, spectacular deaths — by train, by nail gun.

An Atlanta cop, played by British actress Olivia Williams slinging a Georgia accent, is a little out of her depth. But she persists in trying to get the surviving members to tell her who is doing this, and why.

It's more a botched Ayer movie than a retro Arnie adventure, but there are elements of both dragging this down. Extreme, graphic violence and a serious anti-law-enforcement ethics combine with flippant gunslingers executing bad guys and dropping the occasional bystander, giving more thought to their "zingers" than the body count.

"Sabotage" mainly leaves moviegoers wondering when this worn-out Austrian war horse will be put out to pasture.

"Sabotage" is rated R for sexual bloody violence, pervasive language, some nudity and drug use. Running time: 97 minutes.

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300: Rise of An Empire (R) - Fri & Sat 22:30
Divergent (PG-13) - Thurs 20:15, Fri & Sat 22:30, 22:30, Sun 20:00, Mon-Wed 20:15
Rio 2: Captain America: Winter Soldier (PG-13) - Thurs 17:45, 20:15, Fri 17:30, 20:00, 22:30, Sat 13:30, 17:30, 20:00, 22:30, Sun 13:30, 17:30, 20:00, Mon-Wed 17:45, 20:15
Mr. Peabody & Sherman (PG) - Thurs 15:45, Fri 15:30, Sat 13:30, 15:30, Sun 15:45, Mon-Wed 15:45
The Lego Movie (PG) - Thurs 20:15, Fri-Sun 17:15, 20:15, Mon-Wed 17:30, 20:15
Rio 2 (G) - Thurs 16:00, 18:00, Fri 15:45, 18:00, Sat 13:30, 15:30, 18:00, Mon-Wed 16:00, 18:00
The Lego Movie (PG) - Thurs & Fri 15:45, Sat & Sun 13:30, 15:30, Mon-Wed 15:45

Scan Here or visit: www.broadwaykingofmagic.com

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

PAINT & PINT

Social painting a popular pastime at bars, art studios

By KATHY MATHESON
The Associated Press

The Fox and Hound pub in downtown Philadelphia boasts all the fixings of a standard sports bar: huge TVs, numerous beers on draft and a menu filled with burgers, wings and nachos.

So what are all the easels and canvases for? Welcome to Paint Nite, an opportunity to tap your inner Van Gogh. Just order a drink, put on a smock and lighten up a bit as a friendly instructor takes you step-by-step through the brush strokes of a landscape, still life or skyline.

But be sure to reserve your spot ahead of time. The two-hour event, like more than a dozen others held weekly in Philadelphia, often sells out.

The experience known as social painting is seeing explosive growth in cities across the country as people seek to imbibe and relax while rediscovering their creative side.

"It's been crazy," said Laura Romaine, assistant manager of Painting with a Twist, another paint-and-sip business in the city. "They're banging down the door to come in here and paint."

Not an artist? Join the club. The crowds include couples on dates, co-ed group outings, bachelorette parties and the simply curious. Many can't remember their last encounter with a palette.

Yet something clearly resonates. Painting with a Twist opened its BYOB studio in Philadelphia's funky South Street area in October and already is looking for a second location downtown, Romaine said.

The Louisiana-based company, which

offers lessons as well as private painting parties, had 126 franchises nationwide as of last year — more than double its total in 2011, officials said.

And Paint Nite, which started with one event at a Boston bar in March 2012, has grown in two years to 55,000 people attending 1,100 events per month in the U.S. and Canada, co-founder Sean McGrail said.

The company has been adding 10 cities a month and just started its first overseas operation in Sydney, he said. Next up: Johannesburg and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Paint Nite has also allowed artists like Andrea Vann, 26, to quit unrewarding day jobs and focus full time on their passion. The business operates on a revenue-share model with its licensees, and the hosting pubs and restaurants get extra patrons out of the deal.

Vann, who served drinks in bars for years, now teaches her craft there and creates new artwork on the side. As one of two Philadelphia licensees, she also runs the financial end of her operation, which has included hiring help to keep up with demand.

"When I saw this job, I couldn't believe it because it seemed way too good to be true," Vann said.

On one recent night at Fox and Hound, Vann humorously walked a group of 40 through the creation of "Heavenly Stream," an ethereal depiction of a forest in autumn.

First, she made the budding Renoirs pledge not to whine about how badly they paint or how they screwed up the size of the tree trunk. And, she warned, don't even think about asking her to fix a "mistake."

There are no mistakes at Paint Nite. Well, except for the occasional brush in a beer



PHOTOS BY MATT SLOCUM/AP

Paint Nite supplies include paint, brushes and a relaxing drink. Events such as this two-hour gathering March 25 at the Field House sports bar in Philadelphia are becoming commonplace in cities across America. Participants get a small canvas, brushes, paints and an easy two-hour lesson.



Artist Andrea Vann helps Julie Maletz, of Philadelphia, with her painting on March 25.

glass, which often sits next to the plastic water cup used to rinse bristles.

Allison Meng, who works in customer service for a transportation company, said she took the art excursion because she wanted to "step outside my boundaries."

"It was a challenge for me, but I really did enjoy it," Meng said. "I don't have an artistic bone in my body."

Some said they came to shake up their night life — to "drink creatively," as the Paint Nite motto says.

Yet Romaine suggested that perhaps participants are attracted to the idea of doing something tactile, making an object they can touch and take home.

"People don't do a lot of things with their hands anymore," she said. "We're all on screens all day."



There are no mistakes at Paint Nite. Well, except for the occasional brush in a beer glass, which often sits next to the plastic water cup used to rinse bristles.

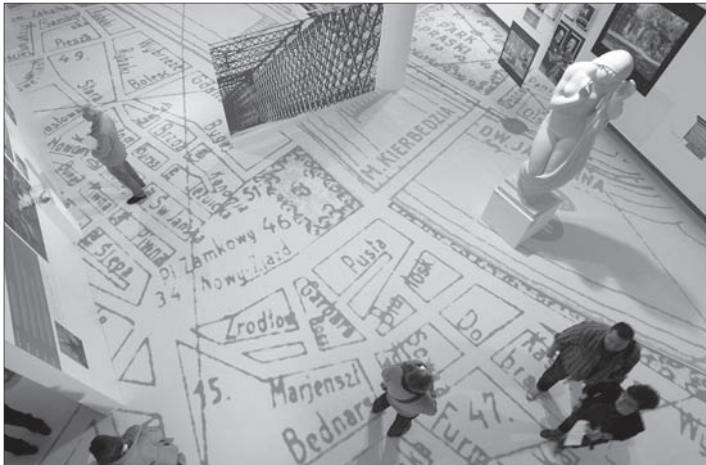


Paint Nite participants work on their sunsets during a March 25 event at the Field House sports bar in Philadelphia.

WEEKEND

Europe

THE EUROPE EXPERIENCE



CZAREK SOKOLOWSKI/AP

Visitors walk through a new exhibition in the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, in Warsaw, Poland. The exhibition will run through June 30 during regular museum hours.

CHECK IT OUT:

Jewish museum in Warsaw, Poland

Old films, music recordings and everyday objects are among items that re-create the atmosphere of Jewish life in Warsaw until World War II in a new exhibition at Warsaw's Jewish history museum.

The "Warszawa, Warszawa" ("Warsaw") in Polish and Yiddish) exhibition at the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews will run through June 30. In sections dedicated to writers, artists, family sagas and daily life, the exhibit shows how the Jews and the city interacted, influencing and enriching each other. The loss of Jewish Warsaw is best shown in pictures comparing some sites as they are now — modern hotels and streets — with the low, old-style architecture of their Jewish times.

"We want to show this melting pot of the two cultures," said Katarzyna Nowakowska-Sito, a museum deputy director.

Until the Holocaust, Warsaw had the world's second-largest Jewish community, after New York, Nowakowska-Sito said. One in three of the 1.5 million Warsaw residents was Jewish.

"The exhibition shows the dual character that the city had until 1939, when the Jewish part of it started to vanish," she said.

The multimedia core exhibition is to open later this year in the impressive modern building and will document in detail the thousand-year-long history of the vibrant Jewish life and culture in Poland that influenced all of the Jewish diaspora.

The museum promises a schedule of cultural events related to the exhibit. Find more information at jewish-museum.org.pl/en

From The Associated Press

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Film in Brussels

The Brussels International Festival of Fantasy, Thriller and Science Fiction Film brings to the heart of the European Union not only the screening of more than 130 films from around the globe but an equally fantastic selection of side events.

Opening Tuesday and running through April 20 at the Palais des Beaux Arts, BIFFP's movies will feature aliens, demons, poltergeists, sadists, vampires and any number of other creepy and otherworldly characters.

Side events include an international body painting contest in which artists transform their human models into living works of art inspired by famous paintings (5:30 to 9:30 p.m. daily April 9-17); a fantasy/sci-fi/horror makeup competition open to the public (5:30 to 10:30 p.m. daily April 9-18); ZombiFF Day, in which a legion of zombies takes to the city streets (Parc Royale on April 12; arrive at noon to be made up by a team of professional makeup artists); ZombiFF Night, a night of costumed dance and live music (Cafe Central from 9 p.m. April 12); a cosplay event (April 13), Vampires Ball (April 19) and more. Most of the above events are free; however, tickets to the Vampires Ball cost 15 euros (about \$20.68).

Single-entry tickets to screenings are either 6.50 or 9 euros; passes for five showings are 38 euros; a pass allowing entry to



Karen Bradbury

See the Europe Traveler blog at stripes.com/travel/europe-travel

all events except the Vampires Ball and Cinematek costs 230 euros.

April 12 is Fantastic Night, in which four full-length films will be screened throughout the night from 11 p.m., followed by breakfast (23 euros).

For more about the festival, see biffp.net.

Golf in its birthplace

Live and breathe for the chance to tee off? The St. Andrew Golf Week would definitely be right up your alley.

Organized twice annually, the event provides amateur golfers the chance to experience golf across the Scottish city's famous greens, engage in competitions and get tips from the pros.

First held in 1974, the event continues to attract golfers from all over the world.

Participants purchase pack-

ages featuring five rounds of golf, including one on the town's famed Old Course; four days of golf instruction from PGA professionals; six nights of accommodation; dinners, including a gala dinner and prize presentation; transfers between hotel and golf courses; a full Scottish breakfast each day; and more.

The number of participants is capped at 80 golfers for the spring edition, April 6-12, and 40 golfers during the autumn event, Oct. 19-25. For accompanying nongolfers, there's a program that includes castle visits and a day trip to Edinburgh. They also enjoy a 600-pound reduction in fees.

Package prices for golfers begin at 2,185 pounds (about \$3,622) when sharing a standard double room. Get details at standrewsgolfweek.com.

Big concert in the Alps

Each year, the Alpine resort town of Ischgl, Austria, brings its ski season to a close with a Top of the Mountain Concert, an event that has provided the public with a steady stream of top-name entertainers since Elton John first performed in 1995.

To celebrate what will be the 20th performance in the series, event organizers endeavored to make this year's edition special, and have lined up British megastar Robbie Williams to take to the stage. Williams, who first shot to fame as a member of boy

band Take That, is recognized as the best-selling British solo artist in the United Kingdom. Williams takes to Ischgl's giant, Alp-studded open-air stage at 7,500-foot altitude on May 3 at 1 p.m.

The most straightforward way to attend is to purchase a multiday ski pass. Two-day passes including the concert cost 125 euros; passes for three days of skiing plus concert go for 135 euros. Silvretta ski area passes valid for four or more days including the concert date are charged in accordance with the resort's standard rates.

Ski passes are available only on site and to those who have Paznaun-Ischgl or Samnaun tourist board guest cards, which are obtained from the same establishment that provides accommodation. No concert tickets will be sold to those without valid guest cards.

Those who want to plan a weekend of skiing and concert-going are advised to make arrangements for lodging soon, as the concert occurs on a holiday weekend for much of Europe.

Find details at tinyurl.com/n6btp19



AP

British megastar Robbie Williams is set to headline the Top of the Mountain Concert to close the ski season in Ischgl, Austria.



Looking for even more to do? For additional events, concerts and activities, go to stripes.com/military-life

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

By PEGGY SISWERDA

Special to Stars and Stripes

Some European cities are impossible to navigate without a car or public transportation, but Gdansk, Poland's, Old Town is just right for exploring on foot. Everything from historical and cultural attractions to shopping and dining is close by. Its compact size also makes it ideal for a weekend getaway.

Recently my husband, son and I spent a couple of days wandering the streets of Gdansk, known as the "Jewel of the Baltic." The city is postcard pretty with its fountains, river walk and lively street scene.

We began at the 16th-century Wyzynna Gate, the entrance to Old Town and the start of the "royal route." The Polish king would have taken this route when he visited the city to collect tax revenues. Today, the gate serves as a tourist information office.

After we passed through the gate, our first stop was the Executioner's House and Prison Tower, also built in the 16th century. Currently the tower houses the Amber Museum, part of the Gdansk History Museum.

Gdansk is known as the "world capital of amber" — the "gold of the north" — and the museum features an extensive collection of jewelry and objets d'art. Our son was impressed by the Fender Stratocaster guitar made of amber, and my husband and I loved the golden amber lamps. Be warned: The exhibits are displayed on multiple floors inside the tower, and stairs connecting them are narrow and steep.

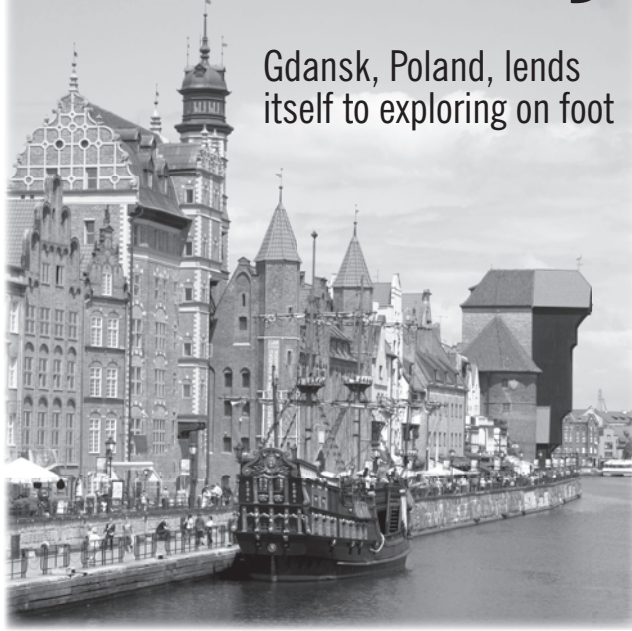
A few steps away, the Golden Gate marks the entrance to the city's main square, known as Long Market. This is where the city's heart beats. The square is lined with stately homes and buildings, many painted in pastel shades and representing different periods of history and architectural styles. Some are open to the public, such as Artus Court, an impressive 14th-century mansion that served as a symbol of the city's power as well as a meeting place for wealthy craftsmen.

Just across the square, the Gdansk Main Town Hall dominates the skyline. Rebuilt after its destruction in World War II, it now houses the Gdansk History Museum, filled with lushly painted ceilings and colorful frescoes. There are also artifacts and exhibits of the city's history, including somber black-and-white photos depicting the bombed-out city after WWII. In addition to historical exhibits, the Town Hall is famous for its 37 concert bells, which chime hourly from its tower.

We took a break on a sunny terrace to enjoy coffee and soak up the Old Town's beautiful ambience. A centerpiece of Long Market is Neptune's Fountain, with its imposing statue of King Neptune. Erected in 1549, the statue was removed and hidden, along with other treasures, during WWII. Today, the regal statue, trident in hand, is a proud symbol of Gdansk's seafaring role throughout the centuries. To learn more about the city's maritime heritage, we made our

Baltic beauty

Gdansk, Poland, lends itself to exploring on foot



With its cozy cafes and colorful architecture, the picturesque waterfront of Gdansk, Poland, is a magnet not only for tourists but also for locals.



Courtesy of City Hall of Gdansk-Mayors Bureau of City Promotion

Artists walk down charming Mariacka Street in Gdansk.

way through the Green Gate, a magnificent four-arched gatehouse at the end of Long Market, and across a short bridge to Oliwianska Island, to the Polish Maritime Museum. The museum is made up of a complex of four museums on both sides of the Motława River.

We began at the Granaries, former warehouses now containing exhibits of maritime paintings, Polish explorers, un-

derwater archaeology and much more. Tied to the dock is the Soltok, a Polish steamship built in Gdansk and now a museum.

We hopped on a ferry to cross back over the river — a five-minute ride — to the family-friendly Maritime Cultural Center, with five floors of interactive exhibits. Nearby is the Old Crane, built in the 15th century and once the biggest working crane in the world.

PEGGY SISWERDA/Special to Stars and Stripes

Continuing our walking tour, we found one of the city's most beautiful streets, Mariacka Street, a secluded lane with a charming, romantic atmosphere. Lining the street are ornate narrow houses once owned by wealthy merchants and artisans, embellished with front stone terraces, many decorated with gargoyles, lions, dragons and sea monsters. Today, jewelry shops dominate the street, selling amber jewelry, of course!

One of our favorite finds was a local hangout just off the main square called Pjawnia Wodki i Piwa, which roughly translates to "the drinking room." Don't worry, it's not a dive bar. In fact, it looks similar to a soda shop with bar stools, Formica counters and servers wearing white aprons and red bow ties. Open 24 hours a day, this venue is popular with young adults — thanks to its low prices. We sampled some Polish snack food — soup and sausage — washed it down with tasty Polish beer and chatted with local townsfolk, who were friendly and welcoming.

Two days in this attractive city wasn't nearly enough. Besides visiting tourist attractions, there's something to be said for simply soaking up Gdansk's



KNOW & GO

Getting there

Lufthansa, LOT Polish Airlines and SAS Airlines are major carriers flying into Gdansk. Budget airline RyanAir flies to Gdansk from the United Kingdom and Italy.

Costs

A Gdansk tourist card includes free admission to most tourist attractions and discounts for hotels, restaurants and shops. The 24-hour pass is 9 euros and the 72-hour pass is 11.50 euros. You can also buy a 72-hour sightseeing and transportation card for 21 euros.

Accommodation

- **The Radisson Blu, Hotel Gdansk** is a block from Long Market, walking distance to most attractions. Rooms are comfortable and start at \$100 a night; radissonblu.com/hotel-gdansk.
- **Hotel Gdansk** overlooks a marina next to the Polish Maritime Museum on Oliwianska Island. A four-star property, it features a charming restaurant, microbrewery, spa and well-appointed rooms starting at \$150 a night.
- **Tabun**, an idyllic farm about 15 minutes from the city center, is a great choice if you have a car. Perfect for families, Tabun is next to a wooded area and has five guest rooms and an apartment. Guided horseback and pony rides are offered. My family enjoyed sitting around the fire pit each evening, chatting with other guests. There's also a restaurant serving delicious Polish fare. A double room runs about \$55 per night; tabun.kuznia.net.

Information

See gdansk4u.pl for tourist information and details about the Gdansk tourist card.

— Peggy Siswerda

charms. Walking along the riverfront, relaxing on a sunny terrace and listening to the bells ring from the Town Hall tower are just as important activities as learning about a city's heritage. We look forward to a more leisurely visit next time!

Peggy Siswerda is a freelance writer who lives in Virginia.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe



PHOTOS BY ERIC A. BROWN/Stars and Stripes

A hearty chunk of beefsteak topped with sweet grilled onions and served with lightly salted steak fries was among the main course options for the lunch special at Beef 'n' Reef in downtown Wiesbaden, Germany.



After Hours: Germany

BY ERIC A. BROWN
Stars and Stripes

My typical lunch routine consists of grab-'n-go fare, like a brat and french fries or a Turkish *döner*. But I've discovered that many of the aristocrats in the wealthy city of Wiesbaden, Germany, are enjoying great noon meals at the city's top restaurants for much less than one might expect.

Like many people, I love finding a good deal. I appreciate the kind that comes as a pleasant surprise — the kind I walk away from with a satisfied grin and didn't have to empty my wallet.

Beef 'n' Reef, as its name implies, is a steak-and-seafood restaurant in the center of Wiesbaden, only a few minutes' walk from the famed Kurhaus.

What I was most impressed with was the lunch special's easy and common-sense approach, which you don't always find in Germany. Included in the special is a beverage of choice, a starter entree, a main course and a coffee selection. Typically, there are four to five choices in each category, and usually one of those is vegetarian. There are different entree selections each week.

My starter was a tasty piece of tuna lightly grilled, rolled in sesame seeds and served with a side of zucchini in cream sauce. It was quite possibly the best tuna roll I have ever tasted. My main course was a hearty chunk of beefsteak cooked medium-well, topped with sweet grilled onions and accompanied by lightly salted steak fries.

My wife enjoyed the house salad with a honey and balsamic vinegar dressing for her starter. For her main course, she opted for the fried egg over sautéed



Sautéed spinach with rosemary potatoes topped with a fried egg as served at Beef 'n' Reef.

spinach, and she wasn't disappointed. Served with roasted rosemary potatoes, the sautéed spinach was a tasty delight. It is evident that Beef 'n' Reef

has perfected its rotating lunch menus. I was also pleased by the espresso we had to top off our meal.

Although the restaurant's

dinner entrees are of the highest quality, so are the prices at dinner hours. This restaurant offers an atmosphere appropriate for either a light lunch on the street side patio or a romantic dinner with your companion. While I recommend keeping this restaurant in mind for a romantic date night, you don't want to pass up its weekly lunch menu at a fixed price of 10.90 euros.

It was evident that this is a favorite of the locals, some even holding business meetings here. Whatever your lunch norm is, break out of it and trust me on this one, it is worth it.

Although the waitress didn't speak much English, she was friendly and more than willing to try to understand my German. We all got a good laugh at my attempt at saying *Tunafischwirfel*, and I love restaurants like that.

They appreciate all customers, and you feel well-served, walking away with a grin on your face.

brown.eric@stripes.com



The eatery's 10.90-euro lunch specials feature appetizers like this petite tuna portion rolled in sesame seeds, topped with zucchini and arugula leaves and sprinkled in a light balsamic dressing.

BEEF 'N REEF

Location: Downtown Wiesbaden, just three blocks northwest of the Kurhaus. GPS: Taunus Strasse 23, 65183 Wiesbaden.

Directions: From the Hainerberg military community, drive toward downtown Wiesbaden on Frankfurter Strasse. After about a half-mile, turn left onto Rheinstrasse. Wilhelmstrasse turns slightly left and becomes Taunusstrasse. The restaurant is on the right. Parking can be found at the Kurhaus garage just two blocks away.

Hours: Lunch noon-3 p.m. and dinner 5:30-11:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday; 5:30-11:30 p.m. Sunday.

Dress: Business casual for dinner; casual for lunch.

Cost: Most regular menu starters are less than 10 euros; main courses range from 9.50 euros for pasta dishes to 39.90 euros for the flagship surf and turf featuring a 7-ounce filet mignon and lobster for 39.90 euros.

Menu: Dinner menu is in German and English. The special lunch menu is in German only.

Information: Phone (+49) (0) 0611-54109186; website: beefnreef.de; visit Beef 'n' Reef's Facebook page for the week's specials; facebook.com/beefnreef; email: info@beefnreef.de.

— Eric A. Brown

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe

Honoring the egg

German Osterei Museum displays decorated eggs from many cultures

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

With Easter just around the corner, I figured what better time to visit a museum dedicated to the holiday's signature symbol: the Easter egg.

The Osterei Museum, in the German countryside village of Sonnenbühl, is purported to be the only museum of its kind in Germany. I suppose there is a reason for that. How many egg museums does one country need?

Only about 40 miles outside of Stuttgart, the museum was close enough to home that if it wasn't all it was cracked up to be, it wouldn't ruin my day. And with an entrance fee of 4 euros, it



By SCHILLING/Stars and Stripes

wouldn't break the bank, either.

There are two levels to the museum, which opened in 1993. On the first level, craftsmen sell their wares. The eggs look pretty.

And at the gift shop you can purchase hand-decorated Easter eggs ranging from 5 euros to 100 euros. After a quick look around, I went to the second level, where eggs from around the world are showcased.

There are about 100 eggs in the exhibits. In most cases, the eggs are covered with intricate, hand-painted pastoral scenes, celebrating nature. Others have religious themes and are decorated with biblical scenes.

There's a display of traditional Ukrainian and Russian eggs, which are a big part of the Orthodox tradition. There also are eggs from numerous eastern European countries, such as Poland and Hungary, where Easter is generally a big deal.



The museum includes eggs from all over the world, including these with African themes.

PHOTOS BY JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

The Osterei Museum is located at Steig Strasse 8, Sonnenbühl, Germany. Head south out of Stuttgart on the B-27 highway. Carry on past the airport in the direction of Reutlingen. Exit onto the B464 and follow signs for Sonnenbühl. Eventually pick up the L382, which will take you directly through Sonnenbühl. Turn left on Marktstrasse and then left on Steig Strasse.

TIMES

March 15 through June 9, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays to Saturdays; 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sundays; June 10-Nov. 2, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sundays. Closed Mondays.

COSTS

Entry costs 4 euros for adults; 2.50 euros for ages 6-14; ages 5 and under get in free. Group rates for 20 people or more cost 3 euros per person. A fam-

ily card (four people) costs 10 euros.

FOOD

The museum has a small cafe offering coffee and snacks.

INFORMATION

Telephone: 07128 774; website: sonnenbuehl.de/data/ostereimuseum.php, in German only.

— John Vandiver



Colorful flowers and red peppers dominate the art on these Hungarian eggs.

There were even eggs from China, but I suppose those had nothing to do with the Christian holiday of Easter. These eggs were painted with ancient scenes with people in traditional dress.

Unfortunately, all the displays are in German, so English-only speakers are out of luck if they want to read more about the respective exhibits and learn about the finer points of the eggs.

On the other hand, it might just be enough to appreciate the intricate designs and engraved eggs for what they are, and move on. In my experience, Easter eggs were always hard-boiled and dipped in watercolors. There weren't any eggs like that on display, which was a bit of a disappointment.

In a nutshell — or should I say eggshell? — this is a place for Easter egg aficionados and anyone passionate about fine art as applied to egg-shaped things. Otherwise, the museum is likely to disappoint.

Still, if you're a hard-boiled Easter lover, it wouldn't hurt to



drop by the Osterei Museum. At a minimum, you'll have the chance to walk away with a few nice presents from the gift shop. The drive on the way there, through the rolling-hill country, also is lovely.

But if you're neutral on the subject of decorated eggs, you might want to find another way to enjoy this Easter season.

vandiver.john@stripes.com

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Headed to Rome? Go for Baroque

Rome is the birthplace of the Baroque style, and Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who lived and worked here in the 17th century, is considered its father. Bernini transformed the city, ornately ornamenting grand fountains, squares and churches — and attracting pilgrims to the center of Catholicism.

Even seemingly insignificant Roman churches, such as Santa Maria della Vittoria, hold important Bernini's treasures, including his best-known statue, St. Teresa in Ecstasy. Bernini invigorates reality with emotion, depicting Teresa just after being stabbed with God's arrow of fire. Now, the angel pulls it out and watches her reaction. Teresa swoons, her eyes roll up, her hand goes limp, she parts her lips ... and moans. The smiling, cherubic angel understands just how she feels. You can simply feel, imagine and see the lessons via the art — emotion going directly from your eyes to your heart. Don't reflect. Be moved.

Emotions are tapped again inside the Church of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, often called the "Pearl of the Baroque." Here, Bernini's altar painting depicts St. Andrew being crucified on his X-shaped cross. He gazes up to follow the bronze angels above him, up through a light-filled shaft. Then he reappears — now as a marble statue — above the altar. He bursts through the

pediment, ascending on a cloud, into the golden light where he joins his fellow saints in the dome of heaven.

Bernini makes all these elements come together. The pink marble columns color-coordinate with the pink frame of the painting. A bronze angel rests his hand on the painting's marble frame. The delightfully backlit cherubs at the base of the shaft playfully look down on the action. And the suffused light filtering in from the dome brings all the colors together. Multitalented Bernini combines sculpture, painting and architecture into *un bel composto* — a beautiful whole.

Bernini's talents are also evident in St. Peter's Basilica, the greatest church in Christendom, representing the power and splendor of Rome's 2,000-year domination of the Western world.

Built on the memory and grave of the first pope, this is where the grandeur of ancient Rome became the grandeur of Christianity. While Michelangelo designed the dome, Bernini designed the square out front a century later. Its ring of columns symbolizes the arms of the church welcoming everyone. Topping the col-

umns are Bernini's 140 favorite saints, each 10 feet tall.

Bernini also worked on the church's interior, including much of its marble floor decoration, the massive statue of lance-bearing St. Longinus, and the altar area's seven-story bronze canopy (God's "four-poster bed"). The canopy "extends" the altar upward and reduces the perceived distance between floor and ceiling.

While Bernini was religious, he also embraced pagan subjects. Outside the city center and set in the greenery of surrounding gardens, the Borghese Gallery holds some of the finest examples of these. This plush museum was once a cardinal's lavish mansion, filled with the finest art money could buy — including Bernini's. It's hard to believe that a family

of cardinals and popes would display so many works with secular and sensual — even erotic — themes. But the Borgheses felt that all forms of human expression glorified God.

Bernini's statues here merge realism with myth. David's body — would like a spring and lips pursed as he prepares to slay the giant — shows the determination of the age. Bernini was just 25 when he sculpted this — and the face of David is his.

The Borghese also holds my favorite statue in all of Europe, Apollo and Daphne. Bernini froze this scene at its most emotional moment — just as Apollo is about to catch Daphne and she begins to sprout branches from her fingers and roots from her toes. (The statue is now in particularly fine form, having spent

two years in restoration.)

The flamboyance of Bernini's art continued to influence Rome's style even a century later. Rome's iconic Trevi Fountain — dating from the 1700s — is a watery avalanche of Baroque. While the architect who designed it had no inkling of electrical illumination, it seems made for floodlighting, which heightens the drama. It's said that if you throw a coin into this fountain, you will return to Rome. Every day, tourists test this superstition, trying to ensure their return to this Baroque-filled city. I do this every year and it seems to work.

Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.



Rick Steves

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

IN BLOOM

CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVALS



As of March 19, the Japan Meteorological Agency predicts cherry blossom trees will begin blooming April 10 in Sendai, Japan, and April 24 in Aomori, Japan. For a forecast for Japan: tinyurl.com/intosakura. For more events in Japan and South Korea: stripes.com/bloom

Japan

CHIDORIGAFUCHI (Tokyo): Through April 6; the northeastern moat of the Imperial Palace is one of the most famous sites to view cherry blossoms in Japan, and the bloom is illuminated 6:30-10 p.m. during the festival.

KOISHIKAWA KORAKUEN (Tokyo): Through April 6, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.; five weeping cherry trees bloom here; tinyurl.com/kvjfrgs

SHIROISHI RIVER CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL (Miyagi prefecture): April 10-25; one of the best known sites to view the bloom with 1,000 cherry trees along Shiroishi River dike, illuminated 6-10 p.m. during the event.

YAMATAKA JINDAI CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL (Yamanashi prefecture): Through April 22, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.; a tree here is believed to be 1,800 to 2,000 years old. The best time to view it is April 5-12; Hokuto city.

MOUNT YOSHINO (Nara prefecture): Through late April; known as the best cherry blossom site in Japan with 20,000 trees; tinyurl.com/msc6cvd

South Korea

GYEONGJU CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL (North Gyeongsang province): Through April 13; at Bomunho Lake Resort, along with neighboring Gyeongju; tinyurl.com/ozw126l.

CHINHAE CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL (South Gyeongsang province): Through April 10; celebration started as a memorial in 1952 to remember Admiral Yi Sun-shin, a 16th century Korean military leader, then the community added the cherry blossoms celebration about 10 years later; tinyurl.com/aaztkh5



Photos by the AP

At top, a visitor photographs the cherry blossoms March 25 in Ueno Park in Tokyo. Above, two women wearing kimonos stroll to see cherry blossoms March 29 at Sumida Park near the Tokyo SkyTree.

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THE NEW SANNO

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



Find your happy place at one of these sites

By LYNN O'ROURKE HAYES
The Dallas Morning News

From catchy Oscar-nominated tunes to lists with various measurement criteria, happy is hip. Here are five cheery destinations to consider:

1 Bhutan. This South Asian country measures its policies in terms of gross national happiness (GNH). In the shadow of the towering Himalayas, visitors to this welcoming nation are treated to snowcapped peaks, a rich culture steeped in Buddhist tradition, hiking, river rafting and colorful markets and festivals. Visit monasteries clinging to cliff sides and the homes of local people to observe GNH for yourself.

Contact: mythsandmountains.com
2 Anaheim/Orange County, Calif. While it's best known as home to Disneyland, the self-declared Happiest Place on Earth, this sunny southern California locale recently received accolades for positive attributes beyond the theme-park boundaries.

Spend a day at the beach or sign up for free, kid-focused fishing clinics at Dana Wharf. Access hiking and hiking trails or visit one of several family-friendly museums.

Contact: disney.com; anaheimoc.org
3 Volunteer in the Virgin Islands. Research indicates that volunteering for as few as two hours each week can reduce the risk of heart disease, anxiety and depression. Add a little sunshine, combined with the chance to join the Friends of the Virgin Islands National Park for a day of beach cleaning and trail maintenance, and your family is bound to feel shiny and bright. The Westin resort on St. John can help organize your service and then send you in the direction of age-appropriate fun. The Westin Kids Club offers a range of outdoor activities as well as arts, crafts and movies. There's also a 1,200-square-foot Teen Center.

Contact: westinresortstjohn.com
4 Canada. Our neighbors to the north score well on geographic happiness charts. And history tells us there's

nothing like the promise of prosperity to add sparkle to the eyes of an intrepid adventurer. Find out for yourselves by reliving one of the most exciting and colorful eras in Canadian history and follow the route of the Klondike Gold Rush. Plan a stop in Dawson City, where dusty streets lined with old-time boardwalks and historic buildings evoke a sense of what life was like in the Wild West. You'll also have chances to fish, hike and view wildlife.

Contact: travelukon.com
5 San Luis Obispo, Calif. Visit this seaside town, halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, and find out why a recent study revealed that its residents are more likely to smile and experience joy than those who live elsewhere. The area's natural beauty, free concerts, zoos, water parks and scenic stretch of coastline likely contribute. Visit a local farmers market and settle nearby for a family picnic. Check out the art scene, go for a hike and visit the Children's Museum.

Contact: visitislo.com

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WEEKEND

Pacific

THE PACIFIC EXPERIENCE

OFF BASE



LEE JIN-MAN/AP

STAY DRY: Umbrella art in Seoul, South Korea

Visitors walk under umbrellas symbolizing the earth's environment and peace along Cheonggye stream in Seoul on March 27. For more on the 11-km Cheonggye stream, which passes beneath more than 20 bridges: tinyurl.com/5v5qdy3



Stars and Stripes

Flower power

The 45th Bunkyo Azalea Festival at Nezu Shrine is April 5 to May 6. Nezu Shrine is one of the most famous places in Tokyo for azaleas. For more: tinyurl.com/cr4f3gg



Courtesy of Hida Takayama Sightseeing Association

Delights of the season

The highlight of Spring Takayama Festival April 14 and 15 in Gifu prefecture, Japan, is a parade of floats 1-4 p.m. on April 14, and in the evening, the floats are lit with lanterns and drawn through the streets. There is a second parade 12:30-4 p.m. April 15.



Go Dutch in Japan

The Nagasaki Huis Ten Bosch Tulip Festival through April 13 in Nagasaki prefecture, Japan, features a half-million tulips at the Dutch-style theme park. For more: english.huisitenbosch.co.jp

Stars and Stripes

ON BASE

Events are as accurate as possible at press time. Since times or event schedules can change, please verify events before attending.

Japan

- **Atsugi** Athletics has a Cherry Blossom 5K at noon April 25 at Halsey Gym (sign up by 11 a.m.). Visit Hakone on April 12 and Wachi Village, Sake Brewery & Kewagoe on April 27 with ITT Tours. ITT Tours is also offering transportation to see John Mayer on May 12.



- **Yokosuka** Single Sailor Liberty Program has a tour to Tokyo to see the cherry blossoms on April 12. It's also hosting a horror movie marathon on April 13. Visit Kyoto overnight and see a maiko performance April 11 with Yokosuka Tours.

- Try open-air rock climbing for beginners on April 13 with **Camp Zama** Outdoor Recreation Center and Leisure Travel Service. The center is also offering a trip April 12 to Wild Monkey Park, Obuse Town and the Ueda Castle ruins.

Guam

- America's Kids Run, open to ages 2 and older at **Andersen Air Force Base**, is April 26 at the base track across from the theater. Hike to Hapito Beach on April 19 with Outdoor Recreation.

Okinawa

- Enjoy ice skating in the spring with **Kadena** ITT on April 9. See Okinawa's wildlife park Neo Park and hundreds of butterflies at Butterfly Park on April 10.

- Kayak the Yanbaru Mangrove Forest with **Camp Foster** Tours April 20. There's also a trip to see Dragon Boat Races on May 5.

To see your events here: SSPDFlibrary@stripes.com.

Hear this!

See Uncle Kracker live on April 12 at Foster Festival at Camp Foster. For more: tinyurl.com/od8xvjt



AP



Looking for even more to do? For additional events, concerts and activities, go to stripes.com/military-life

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific



PHOTOS BY ERIC GUZMAN/Stars and Stripes

Shiga Kogen offers both large mountain slopes as well as smaller, more accessible ones so skiers and snowboarders can enjoy the powder regardless of skill level.

Powder hunt

Shiga Kogen offers late-season skiing

By ERIC GUZMAN
Stars and Stripes

Skiers and snowboarders can find a little late-season love from ski resorts in northern Japan.

Nagano, for instance, is known to be a haven for winter sports enthusiasts. Easily accessible by bus or train and located just a few hours north of Tokyo, the mountainous region offers a bevy of ski and snowboard resorts and a nearly endless supply of slopes and fresh snow.

Nagano's Shiga Kogen Ski Area consists of the Mount Nokote region to the south and the Oku Shiga Kogen region to the north, both of which meet in the border town of Hasuiki. The Oku Shiga Kogen region was once home to slalom events in the Winter Olympics.

Throughout Shiga Kogen, there are more than 20 ski resorts, all accessible by bus, and about 70 lifts to ferry winter athletes to the tops of various

mountain slopes and hills.

The lifts are positioned conveniently enough. However, if visitors would like to forgo the 5,200-yen charge for a lift ticket, there is also a shuttle bus that runs between resorts that is free when you stay at certain hotels. Non-guests can expect to pay up to 1,000 yen for a bus ride to the top.

Though there aren't many things to do in Shiga Kogen outside of snow sports, there are several onsens in the area, and a bus trip to the Jigokudani Monkey Park is available at most hotels. Both getaways come recommended by local hotel staff as alternative means of fun for those who want to give the slopes a rest.

A majority of the resorts in the area have English-speaking staff, but it is recommended that you confirm before you book your hotel. Most hotels have shuttles that will pick you up from train and bus stations.

guzman.eric@stripes.com



For time away from the slopes, there are temples and statues to visit in small towns around Shiga Kogen.

Tips for finding the lowest airfare

By GEORGE HOBICA
Airfarewatchdog.com

No question about it, airfares on many routes are higher than they were

four or five years ago. Fuel costs, fewer flights and less competition due to airline mergers add up to prices reaching for the sky. Here are some ways to make your airfare dollars go farther.

• **There's no "magic" day or lead time to buy the best airfare.**

A lot of airfare "experts" think they're clairvoyant, but they're not. They will tell you that they know when fares will drop and how far in advance you should start looking for a fare. The latest myth is to buy exactly 54 days in advance. Others say buy on Tuesday at 3 p.m. or Wednesday at midnight or when the moon is full (just kidding). But airlines are unpredictable, and anyone who claims he or she knows that airfares will be lower or higher in the coming months or the coming days should trade in his or her crystal ball. No one can accurately predict where airfares are heading any more than experts can predict the stock market.

• **Search often over a long lead time, and pounce when there's a deal!**

Fares fluctuate throughout the day, and the number of seats offered at the lowest fares also changes frequently. Or someone might be holding the only seat at the lowest fare and not book it, so it goes back into inventory — and then it will be yours. So if you don't like the fare at 10 a.m., check at 2 p.m. or the next day or the next week and pounce when the fare is affordable. It's easy to leave open the browser page where you're searching and keep refreshing the page.

• **Get airfare alerts by email.**

This is perhaps the easiest way to track airfares. Many travel websites offer emailed airfare alerts, letting you know when fares go down, and they all have something to offer. Do a browser search for "airfare alerts"

and you'll see what's available. The airlines want to develop a relationship with you, so they'll send you special deals, such as 50-percent off promo codes or twofers, if you sign up for their emails.

• **Use Twitter.**

Email is great, but some of the most amazing airfare deals last only a short time (even if they're valid for travel over a long period), or you open the email too late. Twitter is more immediate. Follow @Airfare-watchdog, where we tweet unusual airfare deals every day and alert followers to promo codes and other airfare deals.

• **Be flexible about dates.**

If you don't care when you go as long as the fare is low, try a flexible date search. It's getting harder to search flexible travel dates now that many sites (Orbitz, Hotwire, Travelocity and Expedia among them) have eliminated their flexible date calendars. But Kayak.com still has a good one (you need to register as a user to see it under Flights>more options/flex month). Another good site is Adioso.com, and Google has two sites worth exploring: google.com/flights/explore and google.com/flights.

• **Search airline sites individually.**

Many airlines have "private" sales, reserving their very best fares for their own sites. These are different from promo code sales mentioned above. International airlines such as Aer Lingus, Iberia and Qantas regularly offer lower fares (i.e., \$100-\$400 less) on their own websites compared with what you'll find on Kayak or Orbitz.

• **Buy two fares, not one.**

You might save money by purchasing one regular fare (say, to Singapore) and catch a flight on a low-cost carrier such as Airasia.com from there. Just be sure to give yourself plenty of time between connecting flights in case one flight is delayed.

• **Use Priceline for last-minute trips.**

If you don't have a 7-, 14-, or 21-day advance purchase window to buy your fare, your best bet is the "name your own price" feature of Priceline.com. True, you won't know the exact flight times or airline you're flying on until it's time to pay for your trip, but you can save 50 percent or more.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Express bus from Nagano Station to Shiga Kogen.

TIMES

November to May 6.

COSTS

One day lift tickets cost 5,200 yen. Half-day tickets and long-term rates available.

GEAR

Protective equipment, skis and snowboards are available for rent or purchase.

INFORMATION

The Shiga Kogen Ski Area is listed under Nagano Prefecture at snowjapan.com/japan-ski-resorts.

— Eric Guzman

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FUN TOURS

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Pacific



PHOTOS BY TREVOR ANDERSEN/Stars and Stripes

Comedian Dave Gutteridge runs and hosts the Tokyo Comedy Store New Material Night at the Double Tall Cafe in Shibuya, Japan. The Comedy Club performs all over Tokyo.

After Hours: Japan

By TREVOR ANDERSEN
Stars and Stripes

Stand-up comedy in English might seem like an odd fit in Japan, but the Tokyo Comedy Store has been entertaining English speakers with stand-up and improv comedy since the '90s.

In the U.S., comedy like this is usually performed in comedy clubs.

But this isn't the U.S., now is it? Despite the name, the Comedy Store has no actual building with its name in flashing lights outside. Instead, organizers book several venues every month for their different shows.

During a recent show at the Double Tall Cafe in Shibuya, comedians with freshly written jokes were able to try them out during the New Material Night. Comedians each got three minutes to try their jokes on the audience. Predictably, some bits went over well; others, not so much.

The show was actually broken into two parts: the New Material portion, followed by a round of improvised comedy games from skilled Comedy Store comedians. All in all, the show was high energy and fully engaging. It was well worth the price of admission ... a drink.

It was surprisingly funny, a review the Comedy Store organizers get so often, they added this line to the website — "Funniest than you think we'll be."

New Material Nights are held the first and third Tuesdays of every month at the Double Tall Cafe. But the Comedy Store has several other shows, including stand-up-only shows where top Tokyo comedians do their best material, and Improv-only shows where the best TCS improvisers show off their skills.



At a recent comedy night at the Double Tall Cafe, Evans Musoka tells jokes in English about growing up in Africa and gaining superpowers. Twice a month, comedians can try out fresh jokes on the audience as part of the Tokyo Comedy Store's New Material Night.

For information on other shows or if you'd like to try stand-up or improv yourself, check out their website at www.tokyocomedy.com

anderson.trevor@stripes.com

DOUBLE TALL CAFE

Address: Shibuya East Side Building 2F, 3-12-24 Shibuya, Shibuya Ku, Tokyo 150-0002

Hours: The show runs from 8 to 10 p.m.

Dress code: Casual
Cost: There's no cover charge, but patrons are required to buy food or a drink once inside.

Information: Website: tokyocomedy.com/new_material_night

— Trevor Andersen



Jon Sahay, a Tokyo Comedy Store improviser, does a partially improvised stand-up set in which he freestyle raps about suggestions from the audience.

Easter side dishes merit a little love

By ALISON LADMAN
The Associated Press

If Thanksgiving is all about the sides, Easter is all about the main. We tend to just cobble together a what-have-you assortment of sides to accompany the beloved Easter ham or lamb.

But we decided Easter side dishes deserve more respect, so we created some dishes to liven up your offerings. We start with peas. Nobody loves them straight up, but give them a simple saute with butter and a trio of seeds — cara-

way, coriander and mustard — and suddenly they are a dish worth getting excited about.

For a fresh take on salad, we created a broccoli slaw seasoned with Dijon mustard, as well as the zests and juices of a lemon and an orange. Chopped dried apricots add a sweet touch while toasted pine nuts offer a savory crunch.

Finally, we have a vegetable patty made from the main ingredients of ratatouille. Finished with fresh oregano, feta cheese and a drizzle of balsamic glaze, this is a side that can hold its own at the Easter table.

BUTTER-SPICED SKILLET PEAS

Ingredients:
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
½ teaspoon caraway seeds
1 teaspoon coriander seeds
½ teaspoon mustard seeds
¼ teaspoon smoked paprika
10 ounces sweet peas
Kosher salt and black pepper

Directions:
In a medium skillet over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the caraway seeds, coriander, mustard and paprika. Cook, stirring frequently, until toasty smelling, about 2 to 3 minutes. Add the peas and saute for 3 to 4 minutes, or until just tender. Season with salt and black pepper. Makes 4 servings, 110 calories each.

CITRUS-PINE NUT BROCCOLI SLAW

Ingredients:
Zest and juice of 1 orange
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
1 tablespoon white balsamic or sherry vinegar
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
½ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 heads broccoli, very finely chopped (about 6 cups)
¼ cup finely chopped dried

apricots
3 scallions, thinly sliced
¼ cup toasted pine nuts
Directions:
In a medium bowl, mix together the zests and juices of the orange and lemon. Whisk in the vinegar, mustard, salt, pepper and olive oil. Add the broccoli, apricots and scallions and mix well. Transfer to a serving dish and sprinkle with the pine nuts.

Makes 8 servings, 100 calories each.

RATATOUILLE CAKES

Ingredients:
3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
1 small red onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
½ medium red bell pepper, cored and diced
1 small eggplant, grated
1 small zucchini, grated
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 egg, lightly beaten
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
½ teaspoon dried thyme
½ cup bread crumbs
¼ cup crumbled feta cheese or goat cheese
2 tablespoons balsamic glaze
2 tablespoons fresh oregano, chopped

garlic and bell pepper and cook until soft, about 7 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a medium bowl. Set aside.

Place the eggplant and zucchini in a clean kitchen towel and squeeze over the sink to remove as much liquid as possible. Add to the onion mixture. Add the tomato paste, egg, salt, black pepper, thyme and bread crumbs. Set aside.

Wipe out the skillet, then heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil over medium-high. Working in batches, drop the vegetable mixture by the tablespoonful into the pan, flattening them with the back of a spoon.

Cook for 2 to 3 minutes per side, or until cooked through and golden brown. Transfer to a serving plate and sprinkle with the cheese.

Drizzle the balsamic glaze over the top and sprinkle with the oregano.

Makes 8 servings, 130 calories each.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



MCT

As one of the cursed, players explore a mysterious and majestic world in search of salvation in "Dark Souls II." As in the first "Dark Souls," dying happens frequently, but this time around, it's not always the player's fault.

Bigger, and a bit boring

Expanded world, limited respawning of 'Dark Souls II' stifles fun of original game

By MICHAEL S. DARNELL
Stars and Stripes

When "Dark Souls II" was announced, fans of the cult favorite were united in joyous celebration, until producers Tomohiro Shibuya and Yui Tanimura dropped the dreaded "A" word on fans, announcing that the game would be more "accessible" to new players.

The "Dark Souls" series had become legend among role-playing aficionados for its punishing — but fair — difficulty level and modern take on old-school game design philosophy. It was the antithesis of what the word "accessible" has come to mean in the gaming industry. That one word caused fans not a small amount of unease and generated a lot of questions.

Would "Dark Souls" be stripped of its unique features? Would the storyline be told through a series of cut scenes, rather than picked up through play? Worst of all, would the difficulty level be lowered to appeal to a wider group of gamers?

Now that "Dark Souls II" is out, I can safely say ... somewhat. "Dark Souls II" retains some of the greatness of the past two games, but it fumbles some key aspects that the previous title got perfect.

When talking about the "Souls" series, it's impossible to ignore how difficult the games are. No matter your level of skill, you will never make it through a "Souls" without dying. A lot. The entire game

revolves around incremental progress built upon learning from your mistakes in combat and taking your time picking through the levels.

You would die, but it would be your fault. Maybe you ran, rather than carefully walked, through a doorway and got hit by an arrow trap. Maybe you took on one enemy too many before healing. Death in "Dark Souls" is an inevitability, but what kept players from getting frustrated and losing interest in the endless cycle of death and rebirth was that when you died, you had nobody to blame but yourself.

This is not always the case in "Dark Souls II." There will be times where enemies break through walls, and attack through pieces of what is supposed to be solid scenery. Largely, these things are glitches and will most likely be patched as time goes on. Some of the things that make "Dark Souls II" more unfairly challenging are design elements, though.

As in the past game, bonfires act as a refilling station for healing items. The downside to using a bonfire is that all the enemies will respawn. This is an important part of the "Dark Souls" experience, because respawning enemies allows for recovery of souls (an item that acts as leveling up points and currency) that are lost when the inevitable occurs.

"Dark Souls II" enemies respawn, but when you kill some enemies a certain amount of times, they disappear for good.

In theory, this is to help advanced players make it through areas faster, without the need to stop to fight irrelevant enemies. What it actually does is make players have to walk through largely empty areas to get to a spot where they can actually find an enemy. It kills the danger element and replaces it with boredom

— not a good tradeoff.

It also ends up being unnecessary, due to the second major change in the "Souls" formula, the change in the world. The world of "Dark Souls II" is enormous, and one of the dreaded concessions made to accessibility was to make the bonfires warp points between areas.

Gone are the days of being trapped in the bowels of a hellish dungeon, having

no option but to fight your way through to the surface. Now, if an area is challenging, you can just leave at any time you want. It's a minor change that ends up changing the entire balance of the levels and removes the oppressive feel of "Dark Souls."

Sadly, the warp system really isn't optional, as the only way to level up is tied to a nonplayer character at the beginning of the game. If players could level up at any bonfire, as before, seasoned players could just ignore the warp system altogether.

The last real negative of the new game is the much-discussed visual imbalance. Some areas of the game are quite ugly to look at, while other areas are much better-looking than any area in the first "Dark Souls." But it's important to note that none of the slow-down that plagued

It's impossible to ignore how difficult the "Dark Souls" games are. No matter your level of skill, you will never make it through a "Souls" title without dying. A lot.

Overall grade: **B**

the first "Dark Souls" is present in the sequel. I will take a slightly uglier world over having to deal with the five frames-per-second of Blighttown, an area that was notorious for its poor performance in the original game.

Those are the negatives of the game. The positives very closely mirror that of "Demon's Souls" and "Dark Souls." The feeling of excitement and relief when you finally conquer an area that was annihilating you hours earlier is still here. The sense of exploration is still here, as there are secrets crammed into nearly every nook and cranny of the "Dark Souls" world. The unique online play that allows you to summon help on the fly is still intact, and the online community is the best in the world. You will still want to shut the game off forever before muttering under your breath and picking up the controller again.

This is still very much a "Dark Souls" game. If you're okay with some junk in your role-playing games and if you're willing to play it knowing there are some things that need patching, then I absolutely recommend giving this a shot.

It doesn't quite live up to the highs of the previous game, but even being the second-best entry in the series makes it one of the best games on the market today.

Bottom line: B Buy it if you like challenge and unique experiences, and you hate tutorials.

Platforms: Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, PC
Online: darksoulsii.com



Many more staff-written game reviews at stripes.com/military-life

WEEKEND: MUSIC

NEW ALBUMS



Sara Evans

Slow Me Down (RCA Nashville)

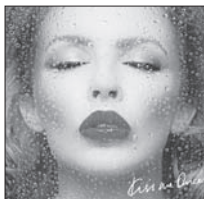
The cover of Sara Evans' new album depicts her in front of a giant clock above the title "Slow Me Down" — an ironic statement for a country star releasing only her second album in nine years.

Taking her time benefits Evans in one way: "Slow Me Down" ranks with such past gems as 2005's "Real Fine Place" and 2000's "Born To Fly," two of Evans' best, and most successful, albums. She also profits from working with one producer, Mark Bright, who also co-produced "Real Fine Place" with Evans, a move away from the multiple producers found on Evans' disappointing 2011 release, "Restless."

Bright adds inventive and engaging arrangements to such standout cuts as "Sweet Spot" and "You Never Know." Evans' maturity also informs her new song.

Judging from the strength of her new work, Evans should ignore her own advice and speed up recording efforts on the next round.

— Michael McCall
The Associated Press



Kylie Minogue

Kiss Me Once (Warner Bros.)

Another year, another Kylie Minogue album. The wheel hasn't been reinvented, nor should anyone expect it to be at this point. These anticipating Minogue's latest album and her recent signing to Jay Z's Roc-A-Fella management to exhibit some overwhelming artistic maturation or chameleon-esque identity overhaul, haven't been following her career for the past 14 years or so. While many artists in the business have needed to reinvent their image and personas each time they return to the spotlight in order to survive, Minogue has consistently released one album after another of habit-forming pop confections, without changing her image too drastically.

Ryan Lathan
PopMatters.com

Chasing the muse

Foster the People sought inspiration, not hits, on follow-up

By CHRIS TALBOTT

The Associated Press

Mark Foster's favorite hit songs are the ones written without thought given to eventual chart potential. So when it came time for him to pen the smash follow-up to his band Foster the People's unexpected out-of-left-field 2011 hit "Pumped Up Kicks," he didn't even bother to try.

"I feel like trying to write a song in order to be a big hit is just not something I'm interested in because it's not going to come from an authentic place of expression," Foster said. "I've heard a lot of bands try to do that type of thing on their second record, especially if they happen to have a hit or a couple of hits on their first, and a lot of times the stuff ends up sounding like Budweiser commercials, you know? We don't make music for that reason. We're not the corporation of Foster the People. We're a band."

The tsunami-like experience of having a multiplatinum, Grammy-nominated hit left the trio feeling unmoored as they completed touring behind their debut. They weren't sure exactly where they wanted to go, but directly to the studio wasn't it.

"Fame is such a weird concept," bassist Cubie Fink said. "It's sort of intangible... Really it's a bizarre press to be striving for something, attain it, then have the whole world around you change — but you're still kind of the same in the middle of it."

So Foster and Fink traveled the world for inspiration for the 11 songs that would go on to make up "Supermodel," which was released on March 14. And drummer Mark Pontius hunkered down at home, processing the experience in a different way.

Foster returned from his travels with song sketches, half-finished ideas and a general concept of where he wanted to go. The band moved into a home in Malibu, Calif., that had a studio and sorted everything out with Grammy-winning producer Paul Epworth, who co-wrote and produced some of the masterful tracks on Adele's "21," including

"Rolling In the Deep." Epworth also produced some of Foster the People's gold-selling 2011 debut, "Torches."

The Malibu location — among the toniest in the U.S. — crystallized everything for Foster. He had just returned from visiting North Africa and the Middle East, where he encountered people who live a simpler subsistence lifestyle, and the juxtaposition resonates on "Supermodel."

"It's really about, I guess, the difference between the culture that we live in in L.A. and looking at the rest of the world and seeing how other people live with the focus on kind of just community, communication, real connections, social media and how social media is affecting our culture now," Foster said. "I think it's looking at isolation in the U.S. and that being something that's kind of growing, and comparing that to other cultures that are really very in tune with how people have been living for thousands of years."

His experiences aren't just reflected thematically. Sound effects sear as we listen into the album's gauzy dream pop, adding a flavor — and a challenge — he hadn't initially expected. For instance, album opener "Are You What You Want to Be?" — with its 6/8 time signature and Dadaist lyrics — leans heavily on sounds he heard while in Morocco.

"I think that's the fun part, really letting that wild animal in the room, then trying to catch the tail," Foster said. "Once you have the tail, it's going to pull you where it's going to pull you. That's the spirit of this album."

Foster The People frontman Mark Foster says he's more interested in authentic expression than a big hit to follow the band's 2011 smash single, "Pumped Up Kicks."

JACK PLUNKETT, INVISION/AP



Foster the People

Supermodel (Columbia)

Let's save everyone a lot of trouble. If you're looking for "Pumped Up Kicks 2: The Sequel" on Foster the People's new album, "Supermodel," it's not there. There's nothing even close.

That's not a failure on Foster the People's part, just their statement of purpose. The peppiness of "Pumped Up Kicks," which was arguably the song of the summer of 2011, camouflaged the tale of a schoolkid getting ready for a murderous rampage. On "Supermodel," they sound more like Vampire Weekend than that band that had everyone singing about outrunning bullets.

Mark Foster and friends incorporate Afro-pop, new wave and '90s alternative in a

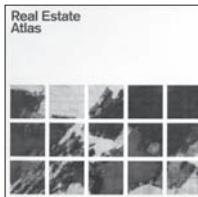


variety of combinations through most of the album, maintaining an upbeat but edgy vibe. One of the singles, "Coming of Age," sounds like New Order meets New Radicals. Another single, "Best Friend," adopts the same lyrical-musical disconnect that "Pumped Up Kicks" used, talking about a strong-out best friend while an '80s synth-funk party breaks out behind it.

It actually becomes quite an engaging party game throughout "Supermodel" to try to filter out all the various influences that helped shape a song. The raging sprawl of "A Beginner's Guide to Destroying the Moon" could net you everything from Boston to Silversun Pickups.

On "The Truth," Foster seemingly debates himself, using both a Bowie-esque baritone and a soaring falsetto to navigate a "world that's so broken." It's the most potent sign on "Supermodel" that Foster the People isn't content with just having something to say — they want to say it in the most engaging way possible.

— Glenn Gamboa/Newsday



Real Estate

Atlas (Domino)

Real Estate's third album, "Atlas," differs little from its predecessors: It rolls along to gentle waves of strummed acoustic guitars and a latticework of trebly, picked electric ones, and the vocals are wistful, understated, and comforting. Although the sound will be familiar, to fans of Real Estate and of the Ridgewood, N.J., band's forefathers such as the Feelies, Galaxie 500, or the easygoing side of Yo La Tengo, Atlas still impresses. It's unassuming but confident, dreamy but precise, leisurely but densely textured.

The opening trifecta of the shimmering love song "Had to Hear," the nostalgic "Past Lives" and the jangly, perky "Talking Backwards" demonstrates a tight sense of songcraft for a band that still luxuriates in a drifting interplay of guitars. Real Estate might not break new ground on "Atlas," but it builds something deeply satisfying.

— Steve Klinger
The Philadelphia Inquirer



The War on Drugs

Lost in the Dream
(Secretly Canadian)

"Lost in the Dream" is an elegant, triumphant album and perhaps the pinnacle of the ambient Americana sound Adam Granduciel and Kurt Vile invented with "Wagonwheel Blues" and Vile's "Constant Hitmaker." It's an alternate universe in which '80s Bruce Springsteen began using synthesizers to approximate dream states for anthems like "Born in the USA" and "Dancing in the Dark" instead of using them in service of pop melodies. "Wagonwheel Blues" took the indie world by storm with its re-appropriation of classic rock. "Lost in the Dream" is a perfection of that sound. The War on Drugs continue to recreate classic rock in their own image and in doing so they created a classic album of their own.

Eric Goldberg
PopMatters.com

WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT

NEW ON DVD

“Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues”: There’s not a lot of good news for

“Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues.” Like the proverbial pony supposedly buried under a mountain of manure, there are some funny comedy moments to this sequel that was almost a decade in the making.

The only problem is getting through all of that stinky material to find the gems. Will Ferrell reprises his role as the socially inept, emotionally awkward, journalistically impaired news anchor Ron Burgundy. Through a series of relatively bland events, Burgundy finds himself working at the first 24-hour news channel. The idea sounds absurd to him, but the money and fame are too much to turn down. Early in the movie, when Burgundy has been reduced to being a SeaWorld host, a young girl shouts “Children and animals hate you, Ron Burgundy.” That’s wrong, little girl. It’s children, animals and at least one film critic when it comes to this overdue sequel.

“Power Rangers: Seasons 13-17”: The 21-DVD box set includes the “Power Rangers S.P.D.” season along with “Power Rangers Mystic Force,” “Power Rangers Operation Overdrive,” “Power Rangers Jungle Fury” and “Power Rangers RPM.” That means there are 166 episodes of action, plus bonus content that includes interviews with members of the cast and crew and archival material. If you are a fan of the colorful heroes, this is a way to power up with the team.



FOX

Geoff Stults, left, trains the platoon for a parade in an episode of “Enlisted,” which also stars Chris Lowell, center, and Parker Young. The sitcom debuted to tough reviews from critics and audiences.

‘Enlisted’s’ producers strive to make peace with critics

By SABA HAMEDY
Los Angeles Times

Writer-producers Kevin Biegel and Mike Royce decided in 2012 to create a TV workplace comedy about the military.

The odds were not in their favor.

Prime-time television, once home to madcap military adventures like Sgt. Bilko on “The Phil Silvers Show,” “Gomer Pyle, USMC,” “Hogan’s Heroes” and “M*A*S*H,” hadn’t supported a military comedy in years.

“It’s basically a workplace that is very important to America and has disappeared from television,” said Royce.

The duo made their sale on the first pitch, to Fox executives who embraced the concept heartily.

“Why isn’t this show on the air right now?” Jonathan Davis, president of creative affairs at 20th Century Fox, remembers asking himself. “Why isn’t anyone doing this yet?”

The resulting night show, “Enlisted,” premiered in January. The ensemble comedy follows a serviceman who is demoted after socking a superior officer and reassigned to lead a group of Army

misfits. Prior to “Enlisted,” Biegel co-created “Cougar Town” and wrote for “Scrubs.” Royce was a producer for “Everybody Loves Raymond” and “Men of a Certain Age.”

The goal with “Enlisted” was “to show, just like any good workplace comedy, how these people grow and bond and how they live their lives every day in this workplace,” Royce said.

Trouble was, though Biegel grew up with two brothers and a father in the armed forces, neither he nor Royce had served in the military. Leery of producing a show that was disrespectful — “We’re not trying to poke fun at the institution,” Biegel said — the “Enlisted” men reached out for help.

After the pilot was shot, they hired Greg Bishop, an advisor at Musa Military Entertainment Consulting, who viewed the show and found it... lacking.

“There were a lot of things wrong with the pilot, not done out of disrespect, but done out of not knowing,” Bishop said. “We said, ‘Wow! They could use our help.’”

Bishop worked with the creators to make the show more authentic and also helped with publicity by reaching out to military members. The improvements

in accuracy didn’t make for a hit. The first of the season’s 13 episodes averaged just 2.4 million viewers and got a weak rating of 0.7 in the advertiser-desired 18-to-49 demographic.

Military members and their families who were not pleased with the inaccuracies took to social media to complain. A Facebook page, “Petition to Cancel TV Show Enlisted,” reads: “This tv show is an insult to say the least to all military personnel. It satirizes our way of life and has no place on Fox or any other tv channel.”

Biegel and Royce said Twitter was also full of people bashing the pilot. So they took to social media to turn the show around. “I probably contacted at least 200 military people on Twitter over direct message,” Biegel said. “I would say, ‘Hey, my name is Kevin. I created the show. Please give it another chance.’”

“It was a matter of going through every medium — blogs, podcasts, websites — to get in there and explain where we’re coming from,” Royce added.

After several episodes, the creators said their outreach effort and changes to fix the show have helped. Fox officials said the show now has an average of 3.1 million viewers.

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UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

Ice Cube, left, and Kevin Hart share the screen in the DVD release “Ride Along.”

Also new on DVD: **“Ride Along”:** A high school security guard (Kevin Hart) must prove his worth on patrol.

“47 Ronin”: Keanu Reeves stars in this tale of a band of samurai swordsmen who avenge the death of their master.

“The Pirate Fairy”: Swashbuckling animated tale of Zarina, a dust-keeper fairy. **“The Bunker”:** A soldier must attempt to save his fellow troops from a rogue special forces unit led by a madman.

“Knights of Badassdom”: Three best friends take to the woods to re-enact a Dungeons & Dragons-like scenario.

“The Dick Van Dyke Show: Classic Mary Tyler Moore Episodes”: Includes 20 episodes of the TV series that spotlight Moore.

“No Holds Barred”: An evil executive creates a new wrestling program where rules don’t exist.

“The Dinosaur Experiment”: Texas town is turned upside down when it’s discovered that a local cattle ranch is a breeding ground for velociraptors.

“American Experience: Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid”: A look at the real story of the famous outlaws.

“Seal Team 8: Behind Enemy Lines”: Covert team of U.S. Navy SEALs is sent to locate a secret mining operation.

“At Middleton”: Two people find love on a college campus. Andy Garcia stars.

— Rick Bentley/The Fresno Bee

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Walk away from excess running

Researchers say years of extreme exercise could increase risk of heart disease

By EDWARD M. EVELD

The Kansas City Star

If running 15 miles a week is heart healthy, running 45 miles a week gives you a cardiovascular system three times as clean and strong, right?

A new study sounds a serious alarm about such thinking, adding to a growing body of research on the topic of excessive endurance exercise.

You've heard of the runner's high.

Researchers now want you to hear about runner's plaque — coronary artery plaque.

In short: Running super-long distances for many years might backfire on you.

"Years of extreme exercise efforts appear to erase some benefits you get from moderate exercise, so that your risk of heart disease, of dying of coronary disease, is the same as a sedentary person," said James O'Keefe, preventive cardiologist at St. Luke's Hospital in Kansas City, Mo.

O'Keefe said the study found that men who were marathon runners for 25 years had 62 percent more plaque buildup in their coronary arteries than men who were sedentary but were similar to the runners in other respects, including age. And the increased quantity of plaque in the marathoners' arteries included both hard, or calcified, plaque and the more dangerous soft, fatty plaque. The latter is the kind that can be predisposed to rupture and cause a heart attack.

O'Keefe is co-author of the paper in the latest issue of *Missouri Medicine*, the journal of the Missouri State Medical Association. The study was conducted by Robert Schwartz and colleagues at the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation.

An unwavering advocate of exercise and its health benefits, O'Keefe said the new study adds weight to the idea that the potent benefits of exercise are "dose dependent."

That is, the right amount matters. Being sedentary is unhealthy. Regular, moderate exercise bestows long-term benefits.

While logging huge numbers of miles and running marathons can keep you thinner, lower your risk for type 2 diabetes and offer other benefits, it appears the subsequent wear and tear on the heart is a potential drawback, O'Keefe said.

The study's marathoners, who had run



JOSE LUIS VILLEGAS, THE SACRAMENTO BEE/MCT

According to a new study conducted by the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation, excessive running over long periods of time could lead to plaque buildup in coronary arteries, putting you at risk for heart disease or a heart attack.

at least one 26.2-mile race a year for 25 years, had a lower weight, resting heart rate and body mass index than the non-runners. The average age of both groups was in the 50s.

That works out well for the 3-milers

— keeping doing that, O'Keefe said — but it's cautionary news for marathoners and ultra-marathoners, at least those who have been at it for years.

Two years ago, in a report published in the journal *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*,

O'Keefe and fellow authors cited evidence that extreme endurance training might cause structural damage to the heart, making it stiff and enlarged. That paper showed that moderate running distances two to five times a week at moderate speeds offered the best health benefits, and that even 15 minutes a day of physical activity was helpful.

Eladio Valdez, coach of the Runner's Edge training group in the Kansas City area, said he is aware of recent research about the potential ill effects of years of "long-distance running, and last year he held a clinic for his clients on the topic.

"I told my runners, 'We can't ignore this research,'" he said.

While such studies don't offer definitive answers yet, Valdez said, the research is "sobering," and he encourages his long-distance runners to see their cardiologist and to consider a scan.

Running fewer miles also reduces overuse injuries, and he has seen clients gravitate to more moderate regimens.

"Moderation may be the answer in running, as with everything else in life," he said.

A runner for more than 30 years, Valdez has cut back his miles from about 40 a week to 20 to 25. He plans on running one more marathon this fall — the 25th anniversary of his first marathon — and then no more.

O'Keefe worries that some people will use the findings to argue against exercise. But they would be ignoring the overwhelming evidence that being sedentary is clearly dangerous for the heart, he said.

Most people will never have the super-exercisers' issues. For every person who is over-exercising, there are 19 people not getting enough exercise, O'Keefe said.

Running about 15 to 20 miles a week provides optimal health benefits, O'Keefe said. Or walking can provide benefits, from 2 miles a day to as much as 40 miles a week. Virtually all types of exercise and activities can be more protective, but moderation is best for long-term benefits, he said.

"This really knocks the props out from under anyone with the excuse 'I just don't have enough time' or 'I've never been an athlete,'" O'Keefe said. "You can train up to be the most ultra-fit endurance athlete ever, but that's not what's required for longevity. Moderate exercise is."

Actresses bring attention to 'oil pulling' trend

By MELISSA SCHUPMANN

The Kansas City Star

You know that oil you've got stored in your pantry — the one you use to cook with? It turns out it could be used for something else entirely. But be warned: It's a trend that doesn't sound too tasty.

In recent weeks, actresses Gwyneth Paltrow and Shailene Woodley have brought attention to "oil pulling," a new beauty trend that has ancient roots.

I just started "oil pulling," which is when you swish coco-

nut oil around (in your mouth) for 20 minutes, and it's supposed to be great for oral health and making your teeth white," Paltrow told *E!* News. "It's supposed to clear up your skin, as well."

In an interview with *Into the Gloss*, a website dedicated to beauty, Woodley, a self-proclaimed environmentalist, told the site: "You can do something called 'oil pulling' where you swish coconut or sesame oil in your mouth when you wake up and spit it out. It's amazing! It really makes your teeth whiter,

because the plaque on your teeth is not water soluble, it's fat-soluble. So the lipids have to dissolve in fats, which is why oil works in your mouth."

The practice apparently originated from ancient Ayurvedic Indian natural medicine, which claimed oil pulling was a remedy for oral diseases.

But don't throw away your toothbrush just yet — very little research has shown that oil pulling is the miracle-worker that some claim.

An article on says that while the practice isn't particularly

harmful, it may not be as beneficial, either.

"(Oil pulling) should not be used to treat oral disease such as gum disease or tooth decay," Michelle Hurlbutt, an associate professor of dental hygiene, told *The Huffington Post*. "It's more of a preventive rinse that could be used adjunctively with your regular mouthcare routine."

The bottom line: If you've got 20 minutes to spare and a strong stomach, swish away. If not, your usual brushing routine should suit you just fine. Just don't forget to floss.



Gwyneth Paltrow



Shailene Woodley

WEEKEND: FAMILY

Before 'I do'

What those planning a wedding wish they had been told first

By REBECCA HUPPMAN
The Baltimore Sun

You've flipped through the magazines, you've set up wedding boards on Pinterest — and you've maybe even watched a wedding reality show or two (it's OK; we all do it). Four months after my big day, I'm here to give you the rundown on the things that no one will tell you about getting your big day together.

You can't do it all

It's OK to ask for help. In fact, it's necessary for your sanity. My crafty crew helped with everything from making chocolate-covered pretzels and hand-painting table numbers to constructing paper flowers and tracking down 6-inch white, unscented pillar candles. Actually, now that I think about it, I was kind of the lazy one of the bunch.

Even with the help of your family and friends, a little professional help goes a long way. If a wedding planner isn't in your budget, consider a venue with an in-house event coordinator.

Prepare for tricky conversations

The no-kids-invited talk: There is nothing wrong with having an adults-only wedding (we did!). Seriously, don't feel like you have to apologize or explain yourself. Your best bet is to let your invitations do the talking.

DON'T: Write a tacky "no kids allowed" note on your beautiful invitations.

DO: Be specific! Write out the names of those invited — like this: Beyonce and Shawn Carter. Not like this: The Carter Family.

The money talk: Are Mom and Dad helping foot the bill? Discussions about money are always tricky — yes, even with your parents. If your parents already brought up the idea of pitching in, you still need to pin down how much they plan to contribute. Start this conversation with a big ol' thank you — or five.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you for helping us with the wedding. Is there a certain expense you had in mind?" If the money talk hasn't come up yet, this conversation is even more awkward. Embrace the awkwardness: "We're starting to plan our budget. I know this is super-awkward, but would you be comfortable pitching in?"

The vendor talk: When planning your wedding, it's crucial to surround yourself with a solid team. Nail down your venue first (sites can book up several months in advance). Your venue can recommend other vendors they've worked with. We found our officiant, DJ and florist through our venue. After getting a few recommendations, dive into some online research, read reviews and set up meetings. Save the in-person meetings for the few vendors you're truly interested in.

At vendor meetings, come prepared with a list of questions, and take notes. Don't make a final decision until you've had time to go home and talk things over.

Watch for hidden expenses

You know about the biggies: the venue, the dress, the suit, the photographer, the DJ, the caterer, the cake, the florist. But, when putting together your budget, you'll also want to keep in mind: alterations; undergarments and accessories; tips for vendors; gifts for your bridesmaids, groomsmen and parents; and postage.

The work isn't over after the wedding

The honeymoon: Start planning your getaway early because as the wedding day gets closer, you're not going to have the time — or energy — to research hotels and compare flight prices. Keep hotel and flight information, confirmation numbers and passports together in a safe place. And, please don't put pressure on yourself to plan the trip of a lifetime. This trip is about relaxing, and enjoying the giddy oh-my-gawd-we're-freaking-married phase. Save the elaborate Europe trip for your anniversary.

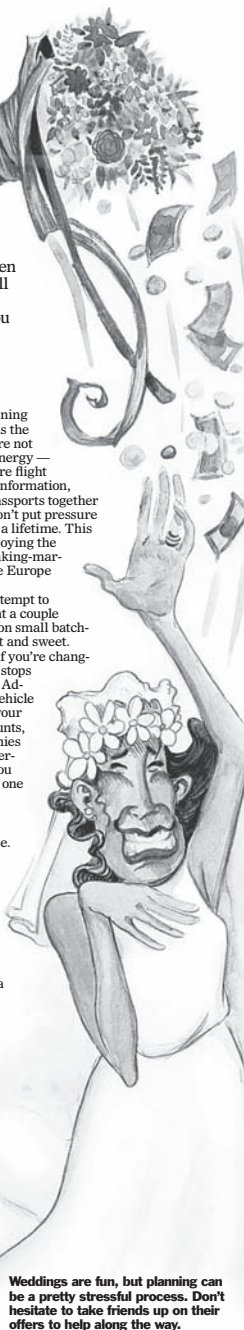
Thank-you cards: Do not attempt to tackle them all at once. I spent a couple hours on weekends, working on small batches. I kept my thank yous short and sweet.

Changing your last name: If you're changing your last name, your first steps should be the Social Security Administration and the Motor Vehicle Administration. Then, work your way down the list: bank accounts, employers, insurance companies and so on. The list seems never-ending, but take your time. You don't have to get it all done in one weekend.

It's about to get real

Wedding planning is intense.

Not to rain on your love parade, but this huge milestone might open up some old wounds. I'm not sure what it is exactly, but planning a wedding can trigger a reflective state of mind. You might suddenly have the urge to re-examine every strained relationship, or call a long-lost relative. Just. Stop. A wedding isn't a Band-Aid or a cure-all. It's an insanely happy day; surround yourself with people who are insanely happy for you.



Weddings are fun, but planning can be a pretty stressful process. Don't hesitate to take friends up on their offers to help along the way.

SPOUSE CALLS

Small-town friends reflect small world

Worlds and stories collided last week at a little coffee shop in Altus, Okla., where family and friends joined me to celebrate publication of a book, a collection of columns that have appeared in this space since the first installment of Spouse Calls appeared April 1, 2007.

Most of the stories I've written over the past seven years had their origins in or around Altus Air Force Base. Altus is the town where my father retired after 20 years in the military. It's also where I met the man who would take me on the next part of my military journey as a spouse. We're still traveling that road, but most of my extended family lives in Oklahoma.

The day of the celebration, my mom was there, of course, along with my stepdad, my grandmother, all of my sisters, a couple of aunts, an uncle, a niece, a nephew, and plenty of friends. I wish my dad could have been there too. He would most likely have enjoyed it from a quiet corner if there had been one. The place was hopping.

My sister Anita and I made faces at the camera while Ashleigh, the baby of the family, took pictures. Another photographer snapped a photo of all four sisters together: Ashleigh, Anita, Terri, Mitzi. That doesn't happen often enough. My grandmother, who is 94, took it all in with a smile.

Classmates from high school days dropped by. Some brought flowers. Others brought along their parents, kids, grandkids and other relatives. Renée, whose Air Force dad also retired in Altus, drove an hour to bring her family. Renée and I met in grade school and were nearly inseparable through high school. We were on the staff of our school newspaper together as tenth graders, so when our journalism teacher, Linda, shied up, it was a happy reunion.

Later, I saw Linda chatting with Amy, a military wife whose family is stationed in Altus for the second time. I met Amy a few years ago when we were both living at USAG Stuttgart, Germany. She stopped me on the canned goods aisle at Patch Barracks commissary and said, "I think I know you. You're Mitzi's sister!"

She was right. When Amy's family was at Altus the first time, her kids were students at the on-base elementary school where my sister Mitzi teaches fourth grade.

Cathy also came to the party. We met at Ramstein, Germany, where she was my daughter's dance teacher. Cathy had known our family a couple of years when we crossed paths in Altus and discovered that she and I are both military kids whose dads retired there. We graduated from the same high school a few years apart, but had never met. She recently moved back to Altus, so she came by to give me a hug to pass along to my daughter.

The paths that cross and converge in a military town give us the sense we're living in a smaller, friendlier world. Those paths brought us all to a particular coffee shop that day: Confectionately Yours, owned by Donald Jouett, an Air Force retiree, and his wife Doris.

Donald and Doris are the kind of people who befriend their customers, including the military ones who come and go; the kind of people who have going away parties at their home for airmen when they complete their weeks of training out at the base.

They love the military, and their military customers love them, as evidenced by the hundreds of unit patches and name tags covering the walls of the shop, given by patrons over 39 years of business.

If you're ever in Altus, stop by for coffee and try the Texas Triple Decadence fudge. Doris was born in Texas, and it's her own secret recipe. Tell them Terri sent you. They know me.

Terri Barnes is a military wife and mother of three. She writes Spouse Calls weekly for Stars and Stripes and is the author of "Spouse Calls: Messages From a Military Life." Contact her at spousecalls@stripes.com.



Terri Barnes

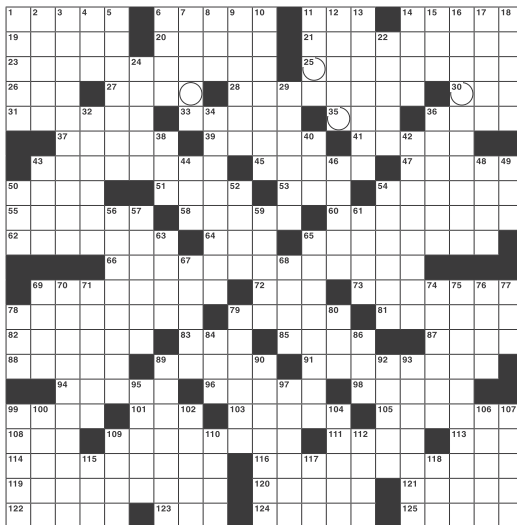
WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

MUSICAL INTERPRETATION

BY PETER A. COLLINS / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

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| <p>ACROSS</p> <p>1 Start of the United Negro College Fund slogan</p> <p>6 Old lab burners</p> <p>11 Abbr. at the top of an email</p> <p>14 Something passed between the legs?</p> <p>19 ___ Domingo</p> <p>20 Now and again?</p> <p>21 Like an ode</p> <p>23 Kind of farming</p> <p>25 Like Neptune among the planets in the solar system</p> <p>26 ___ pro nobis</p> <p>27 Echelon</p> <p>28 With the circled letters, 1955 Bill Haley and His Comets hit?</p> <p>30 Sound of sweet nothings</p> <p>31 Having a beat</p> <p>33 Hall-of-Famer Ralph</p> <p>35 Purveyor of the Doublicious sandwich</p> <p>36 ___ Webster, Twain's "celebrated jumping frog"</p> <p>37 With 43-Across, 1973 Deep Purple hit?</p> <p>39 Like Odin</p> <p>41 Sound engineer's knob</p> <p>43 See 37-Across</p> <p>45 Brings in</p> | <p>47 Some dreams</p> <p>50 Reverse, e.g.</p> <p>51 Dismissed</p> <p>53 "Eternally nameless" thing, in Eastern religion</p> <p>54 Bath accessories</p> <p>55 Dr Pepper alternative</p> <p>58 Former Disney president Michael</p> <p>60 Dreamy romantic quality</p> <p>62 Olympic leap</p> <p>64 Ring Lardner's "Alibi" ___</p> <p>65 It's put on before takeoff</p> <p>66 1959 Dion and the Belmonts hit?</p> <p>69 Old mattress stuffing</p> <p>72 Pond denizen</p> <p>73 Phil who played 65-Down</p> <p>78 1984 Cyndi Lauper hit?</p> <p>79 Memorable series in "Psycho"</p> <p>81 Dawn-to-dusk</p> <p>82 The continents, e.g.</p> <p>83 "Phooey!"</p> <p>85 Kelly of morning TV</p> <p>87 Haughty affectation</p> <p>88 Rap sheet listing</p> <p>89 Query at the start of a poker game</p> <p>91 Verbally assault</p> <p>94 Rene of "Thor"</p> <p>96 Thumbing-the-nose gesture</p> <p>98 Challenge for F.D.R.</p> <p>99 Midcast V.I.P.</p> | <p>101 Meatless day in W.W. II: Abbr.</p> <p>103 Some lawn mowers</p> <p>105 Pertaining to religious rites</p> <p>108 Bugs Bunny address</p> <p>109 Where to find screwdrivers and rusty nails</p> <p>111 Like peas in ___</p> <p>113 Suffix with salt</p> <p>114 Made bats</p> <p>116 Primer pair</p> <p>119 Info on a magazine cover</p> <p>120 Real dear</p> <p>121 More cool, in slang</p> <p>122 French thinkers?</p> <p>123 Wink's partner</p> <p>124 ___ State</p> <p>43 The "I" of Mr. T</p> <p>46 Prefix with thermal</p> <p>48 "Long time" ___</p> <p>48 Boss Tweed nemesis</p> <p>49 New York arrival of '77</p> <p>50 BBC std.</p> <p>52 Bank in need of support?</p> <p>54 Where "hello" is "svetks"</p> <p>56 Reinforces</p> <p>57 Muff a grounder</p> <p>59 Something you can believe</p> <p>61 Hands on deck</p> <p>63 Chicken ___ (Italian dish, informally)</p> <p>66 NCO of 1950s TV</p> <p>67 Former faddish exercise regimen</p> <p>68 Way off</p> | <p>14 Medium for love letters?</p> <p>15 Card reader, for short</p> <p>16 What fastidious people can't be</p> <p>17 ___ Scott Card, "Ender's Game" writer</p> <p>18 Competitor of ZzzQuil</p> <p>22 Label for 28-Across</p> <p>24 Alaskan city</p> <p>29 Fake</p> <p>32 Chef Lagasse</p> <p>34 "To sum up ..."</p> <p>36 No longer in fashion</p> <p>38 Info for an airport greeter, for short</p> <p>40 Victorian ___</p> <p>42 Summons, of a sort</p> <p>43 The "I" of Mr. T</p> <p>46 Prefix with thermal</p> <p>48 "Long time" ___</p> <p>48 Boss Tweed nemesis</p> <p>49 New York arrival of '77</p> <p>50 BBC std.</p> <p>52 Bank in need of support?</p> <p>54 Where "hello" is "svetks"</p> <p>56 Reinforces</p> <p>57 Muff a grounder</p> <p>59 Something you can believe</p> <p>61 Hands on deck</p> <p>63 Chicken ___ (Italian dish, informally)</p> <p>66 NCO of 1950s TV</p> <p>67 Former faddish exercise regimen</p> <p>68 Way off</p> |
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| <p>69 Oktoberfest quaff</p> <p>70 John Locke, philosophically</p> <p>71 Out-of-the-way way</p> <p>74 Brand of pickles</p> <p>75 Slanted writing</p> <p>76 Description on many eBay listings</p> <p>77 The "s" in Awacs: Abbr.</p> <p>78 Dose meas.</p> | <p>79 Eastern religion</p> <p>80 Place for a mani-pedi</p> <p>84 Graz's land: Abbr.</p> <p>86 Rev (up)</p> <p>89 See 95-Down</p> <p>90 1969 Creedence Clearwater Revival hit?</p> <p>92 Quantum physics particle</p> | <p>93 Rubber from Arabia?</p> <p>95 With 89-Down, 1968 Tammy Wynette hit?</p> <p>97 "Twelfth Night"</p> <p>99 ___ to the list"</p> <p>100 Inspector of crime fiction</p> <p>102 One inspiring love of poetry?</p> | <p>104 "___ alive!"</p> <p>106 "Bonne ___!"</p> <p>107 Longing looks</p> <p>109 Some queens</p> <p>110 Didn't stop in time, say</p> <p>112 ___ ale</p> <p>115 French scene</p> <p>117 Hollywood special FX</p> <p>118 "Selenia" star, to her fans</p> |
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GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. E-mail him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

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Josh Elliott: I wanted to get back to sports

The Associated Press

Josh Elliott said Wednesday that his defection from ABC's "Good Morning America" for NBC is a "deeply personal" move to get back to sports at a level he could not have anticipated.

He spoke in a conference call where NBC announced his hiring to work on future Olympics, NFL football and other events. He turned down an offer to remain at ABC's top-rated morning show to be what he described as "the last man on the bench with the showtime Lakers."

His NBC debut is planned for the May 3 Kentucky Derby broadcast.

"I have loved sports since before I could walk," said Elliott, 42. He said he dreamed of being on an Olympics broadcast before he even knew he wanted to be in television. He worked at Sports Illustrated and then ESPN before 2011 when ABC News President Ben Sherwood played a hunch and hired him as news anchor at "Good Morning America."

The arrival of Elliott and Lara Spencer built a feel-good team in the morning that prospered as the duo weathered the excruciating exit of Ann Curry. Now, two members of that team — Elliott and weather forecaster Sam Champion — have left within four months of each other.

Elliott said he had not discussed any role at NBC News, where it was almost immediately speculated that he could be a potential successor to Matt Lauer in the morning. "I hope Matt Lauer is here when I step away from this gig 30 years down the road," he said.

The fallout of his decision, made public Sunday, has been painful and left him feeling like a bit player in an "absurdist melodrama." It has been really difficult, he said. "It's been difficult to read the categorical falsehood after categorical falsehood."

ABC said there will likely be a taped tribute to Elliott on "Good Morning America," but it won't include a live appearance by him.

Nelson's armadillo returned after theft

A stuffed armadillo that serves as an on-stage mascot for country music legend Willie Nelson has been returned after being kidnapped from a Las Vegas-area show.

Officials at the Westin Lake Las Vegas resort in Henderson say the critter, named Ol' Dillo, vanished while audience members were greeting Nelson after a Monday night concert.

Westin marketing director Matt Boland says Nelson's crew called in the middle of the night from the road, asking the resort to scour surveillance footage

after the mascot went missing.

Boland says he was outside the hotel Tuesday morning when an apologetic man drove up and handed him a shoebox and instructions to return it to Nelson.

Boland says the armadillo was inside and was sent to the singer in California.

Other news

■ NBC says 80-year-old **Willard Scott** has tied the knot with his longtime girlfriend. The veteran "Today" show personality and Paris Katsura were wed Tuesday in Fort Myers, Fla. They have been together for about 11 years. "Today" host Matt Lauer said in sharing the news on Wednesday morning's telecast.

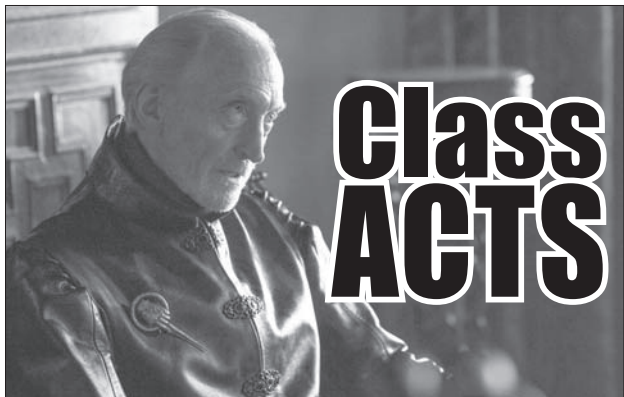
■ Authorities say actor **Colin Egglesfield** has been arrested on allegations that he damaged property at an Arizona arts festival. Tempe police say the 41-year-old actor known for his roles on "The Client List" and "All My Children" was arrested around 2:30 a.m. Saturday on charges of disorderly conduct and criminal damage. Egglesfield was booked into Tempe City Jail before being released on \$1,000 bail.

■ **Jon Cryer**, an actor who knows a thing or two about Charlie Sheen and Demi Moore among others, is working on a "candid" memoir. The Emmy-winning star of "Two and a Half Men" has a deal with New American Library, an imprint of Penguin Random House. The publisher announced Wednesday that the book, currently untitled, is scheduled to be released next spring. In a statement released Wednesday, Cryer joked that he would write about stamp collecting, monetary policy and maybe Sheen, his former "Two and a Half Men" co-star.

Russell Brand's next Booky Wook is for kids. The actor and comedian has a deal with Atria Books for a series called "Russell Brand's Trickster Tales," retellings of classic fairy tales. The publisher announced Wednesday that the first of three planned books, "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," will be out Nov. 11.

■ **The Red Hot Chili Peppers' Flea** has embarked on a "sacred" mission: writing a memoir. The 51-year-old bassist has a deal with Grand Central Publishing, a division of Hachette Book Group. Grand Central announced Tuesday that the book, currently untitled, would be a window into Flea's "intense and dynamic life."

■ The U.S. Embassy says celebrity cook **Nigella Lawson** was denied permission to board a flight to the U.S. on March 30. The embassy did not disclose the reason for refusing Lawson, who admitted during a recent court case that she had occasionally used cocaine. Embassy spokeswoman **Lynne Platt** said Thursday that Lawson was stopped from traveling and had subsequently been invited to the embassy to apply for a visa.



Photos by HBO/AP

Charles Dance stars on the HBO TV series "Game of Thrones," based on the popular novels by **George R.R. Martin**. "I still have not read the books," Dance says. "They frighten me, books that thick. And, anyway, we're dealing with an adaptation." The fourth season starts in the U.S. on Sunday.

2 legendary stars delight in 'Game of Thrones' roles

By FRAZIER MOORE
The Associated Press

Like every "Game of Thrones" fan, Charles Dance was gobsmacked by last season's next-to-last installment.

That episode, "Red Wedding," made good on its title with a massacre staged by the bride's father, Lord Walder Frey, who meant to settle a score with his hall of guests, and did.

"I got quite a shock!" says Dance, speaking for everyone who saw it. "It was bloody in the extreme!"

That Dance was caught off-guard is notable, since he's a star of the show. Indeed, the character he plays, Lord Tywin Lannister, had a hand in the bloodshed. But he didn't actually appear in that episode, "and when I'm not in it, to be honest with you, I don't read the script," Dance says. "I catch up on what's happening when the episode airs."

"Game of Thrones," which returns Sunday on HBO, will pack its next punch soon enough in the new season. Such is the nature of this epic fantasy, set on a make-believe continent called Westeros, chock-full of warring kingdoms, rugged landscapes, lots of sex and swordplay, and, of course, fire-breathing dragons. If the scale of the series is vast, the source material is no less sprawling: the five-and-counting novels by George R.R. Martin in the "A Song of Ice and Fire" series.

"I still have not read the books," says Dance. "They frighten me, books that thick. And, anyway, we're dealing with an adaptation. I think it's counterproductive for actors to come to the set with well-thumbed copies of the book their film is adapted from."

Dance's despotic Lord Tywin is the grandfather of King Joffrey, an infantile tyrant whose betrothed is the granddaughter of Olenna Tyrell. Lady

Olenna is played by **Diana Rigg**. On-screen soon-to-be in-laws, Rigg and Dance have known and worked together for decades, including a 1997 British TV adaptation of "Rebecca." Little wonder they get on famously as they meet with a reporter at a Manhattan hotel.

Rigg says she hasn't read the "Game of Thrones" books either. "I rely upon the directors to fill me in before a shot," she confides. "They're very good with reminders."

The show's dozens of cast members include Peter Dinklage, Lena Headey, Jack Gleeson, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau and Emilia Clarke. Asked what drew him into this elite community, Dance smiles and answers. "The writing was good, the costumes are great and, eventually, the location catering was fantastic."

"I loved the idea of playing this naughty old bag," Rigg says, offering her own explanation. "It's my idea of heaven."

Now 75, Rigg has had a rich and varied career in theater, both in her native Britain and as a Tony Award winner on Broadway, as well as films including the James Bond caper "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" and even an NBC sitcom. But her breakout role was in 1965 in the British TV thriller "The Avengers," where she played the catsuit-clad karate queen Emma Peel.

"I put me on the map," she says, "which a lifetime of Shakespeare wouldn't have done."

Tall and imperial, Dance, 67, grew up working-class in England and overcame a teenage stammer to devote himself to theater. His breakout project was the 1984 British TV hit "The Jewel in the Crown," which he followed with such films as "Michael Collins" and "Gosford Park" and the British miniseries "Bleak House," as well as lots of theater.

His first job: working as a dresser in the original West End production of "Fiddler on the Roof."

Then he landed a spot in a London repertory company with a crushing regime: "It was 16 plays in 16 weeks. What's my motivation? Your weekly paycheck. Just learn the lines and don't bump into the furniture."

'I loved the idea of playing this naughty old bag. It's my idea of heaven.'

Diana Rigg, right, with Natalie Dormer, on her "Game of Thrones" role



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OPINION

Time to rethink deportation standards

By JOHN SANDWEG

President Barack Obama recently directed Secretary of Homeland Security John Boehner to examine U.S. immigration enforcement policies to see how the department can "conduct enforcement more humanely within the confines of the law."

The answer to the president's directive is surprisingly simple: Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement division should eliminate "noncriminal re-entrants and immigration fugitives" as a priority category for deportation.

Current ICE policy prioritizes those individuals solely because they have previously been caught up in our immigration system, not because they represent a criminal threat. Taking that off the priority list would dramatically advance the president's goal of a more humane enforcement system and would enhance public safety and border security.

During the last five years, the Obama administration has transformed our nation's immigration enforcement system, turning it into a system that emphasizes removing criminals and keeping the border secure. In 2010, civil immigration enforcement priorities were established to direct ICE officers and agents to focus their efforts accordingly. Since then, more than 80 percent of the people the agency has apprehended in the interior United States and deported have been convicted criminals.

However, official agency policy also continues to direct ICE officers and agents to investigate, arrest and deport those who unlawfully re-entered the United States after having been previously deported, and those who have absconded from immigration court proceedings, regardless of their criminal history or how long they have lived, worked or raised families in the



DON BARTLETT, LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT

Jaren Rodriguez, 20, stands in line at the pedestrian border crossing in Tijuana, Mexico, on March 10 during a rally organized by the National Immigrant Youth Alliance, which hopes to bring students and families back to their homes in the U.S.

United States. As a result, each year, tens of thousands of people are treated as enforcement priorities based on their immigration history alone.

Many of these people have been in the United States for a decade or more. They often have spouses who are U.S. citizens and have never been convicted of a criminal offense. Frequently, they were deported years earlier and returned to this country to reunite with their families. As a result, focusing ICE's effort on them disproportionately separates parents and children, breadwinners from families, spouse from spouse.

To be sure, those who repeatedly cross our borders illegally or abscond from the immigration court bear culpability. However, making this population a priority detracts from ICE's ability to track down and arrest the increasing number of much more serious public safety threats the agency

identifies. When I was ICE's acting director, I had the privilege of discussing the agency's enforcement priorities with officers and agents across the country. I repeatedly heard these men and women express their support for clear policies that would focus their efforts on the most serious offenders and offenses.

The president was right to suggest a review of ICE's enforcement priorities. Much of the groundwork for the change I'm suggesting has already been laid, and this policy shift could be implemented immediately. It will not solve all of the challenges facing our broken immigration system, but until Congress acts, it can fulfill the president's call for a more humane system and make the country safer.

John Sandweg, acting director of ICE from August 2013 to February, also served as acting general counsel in the Department of Homeland Security. He wrote this for the Los Angeles Times.

How to get women through Infantry Officer Course

By SAGE SANTANGELO

I awoke to Eminem blasting hours before dawn at Quantico Marine Base in Virginia. A fog of breath and sweat permeated the cold January air as I joined 104 other nervous lieutenants having gear to the classroom where we would receive our first instructions. With body armor, Kevlar, a rifle and a huge pack on my 5'3" frame, I must have looked like a child next to the buff guys assembling for Day 1 of the Marine Corps' Infantry Officer Course.

I was one of four women in the group, bringing the number to 14 female officers who had attempted the course since it was opened to women in fall 2012. All the women so far had failed — all but one of them on the first day.

During the test, there came a point when I could not persuade my body to perform. It wasn't a matter of will but of pure physical strength. My mind wanted more, but my muscles quivered in failure after multiple attempts. I began to shiver as I got cold. I was told I could not continue.

The night I did I fail? The question matters because Marine leaders have been watching female participants like me to help them decide how to integrate women into units and positions whose primary mission is to engage in direct ground combat.

My failed attempt at Quantico, and the fact that no woman has yet made it through the Infantry Officer Course, shouldn't be interpreted as evidence that women can't handle combat environments. To date, 13 female Marines have passed the two-month enlisted infantry training course at Camp Geiger in North Carolina. What that course is significantly less demanding

than the one at Quantico, it is still grueling and it establishes the standard for enlisted warfighters.

So what's held women back in the Marines Corps' Infantry Officer Course? I absolutely agree that we shouldn't reduce qualifications. For Marine infantry officers, mistakes mean risking the lives of the troops you are charged to protect. But I believe that I could pass, and that other women could pass, if the standards for men and women were equal from the beginning of their time with the Marines, if endurance and strength training started earlier than the current practice for people interested in going into the infantry, and if women were allowed a second try, as men are.

Female lieutenants aren't as prepared as male lieutenants for the Infantry Officer Course's tests of strength and endurance because they've been encouraged to train to lesser standards. Officer Candidates School, where all Marine officers start out, is segregated by sex. I was in an all-female platoon. We worked with the men on a few occasions but never competed with them. That was odd for me.

Yes, men have biological advantages in tests of upper-body strength. But women can do pull-ups if given enough time to build that strength. Recognizing biologically based advantages and disadvantages and developing training programs that work to balance them are key.

It would be especially helpful if the Marines allowed people to decide on an infantry career earlier and offered some infantry-oriented training earlier, too. Basic training doesn't include enough physical gruntwork under a combat load. More exercises such as running, jumping and climbing while wearing a flak jacket, Kevlar and

a pack would help build strength and endurance. They would also help prevent injuries by increasing bone density.

I also would have liked to have had the opportunity to try the course again. The Marine leadership has said it doesn't want female lieutenants taking the course multiple times, at least until combat positions are available to women, because it doesn't want to delay the rest of their training. Yet many of the men who failed alongside me in January are back at Quantico, training to retake the course in April. The male lieutenants who have taken it before have an advantage in that they know generally what to expect.

My failed effort at Quantico has helped me better understand the needs of the Marines on the ground and will allow me to better support them in the future. At the same time, I love the Marine Corps philosophy that failure should never be viewed as permanent or representative; it is an opportunity to remediate. Marines cannot meet standards all the time. What do we do? We train until every Marine is competent.

It's frustrating to me that there are still doubts about whether women are capable of handling combat environments. The women who have been awarded for their valor in combat, and the women who have died in combat for their country, have already answered the question about capability.

Now, instead of passively evaluating their performance, whether women are capable to set women up to excel in infantry roles. My hope is that the Marine Corps will allow every Marine the opportunity to compete. And that when we fail, our failure is seen simply as a challenge to others to succeed.

Santangelo is a second lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps. This column first appeared in The Washington Post

OPINION

Secret Service problem: Weak leadership, not booze

By DAN EMMETT

These are disturbing days for the agency charged with protecting the president of the United States. From prostitutes in Colombia to drunkenness in Amsterdam, it is no wonder that so many members of Congress — as well as former agents — have lost patience with a Secret Service that can't seem to stay out of the news with embarrassing and high-profile cases of misconduct.

I was a Secret Service agent for 21 years, spent two tours of duty on the Presidential Protective Division and four years on the Counter Assault Team, and was part of trips for three presidents. I retired 10 years ago and have no dog in today's agency fights. I do not believe that alcohol abuse is a cultural problem within the Secret Service. (In fact, many agents do not drink at all, and those who do tend to consume in moderation.)

The problem in the Secret Service is not alcohol or debauchery, but weak leadership. There are too many incompetent managers who want the title, pay and perks of management while performing no duties of leadership. The problem is not bad Secret Service agents but bad leaders.

The U.S. Secret Service was created in 1865 and began protecting the president in 1902. During 110 years of presidential protection, the agency accompanied presidents on hundreds of thousands of domestic and overseas trips without bringing any unwanted attention upon itself. That is because, in my experience, agents tend to be intelligent, well-trained and fiercely patriotic Americans — nearly fanatical in their devotion to the mission at hand.

Yet, they consistently are the best units to perform poorly with poor leaders, and the Secret Service is a prime example. The most disturbing common thread among the recent episodes of misconduct is that supervisors or team leaders have been involved. While it is unacceptable for any agent to commit infractions such as those in Amsterdam and Colombia, it is utterly inexcusable for those in charge to be involved. If managers show continued lapses in judgment, how and why would anyone expect the rank and file to behave better?

The Secret Service may not admit it, but its promotion system is primarily designed to move the best-liked people, not neces-



PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIEVAL/AP

Members of the Secret Service's Counter Assault Team walk across the tarmac at Kortrijk-Wevelgem International Airport in Waregem, Belgium, on March 26. The Secret Service sent three agents home from the Netherlands after one agent was found inebriated in an Amsterdam hotel.

sarily the best-qualified, into managerial positions. Much like in a college fraternity, a small group of senior agents votes on who will be promoted. These decisions are based as much on office politics, popularity and political correctness as the abilities of those being considered for upward mobility. While this practice is widespread in many professions, it is unacceptable in an agency whose primary function is to keep the president of the United States alive and safe.

The agency doesn't prioritize competence among its managers, yet it somehow stands baffled about why it cannot control the behavior of its agents, forcing the director to return to Capitol Hill again and again to apologize for their conduct. The apologies may temporarily appease critics, but they do nothing to address the catastrophic failure of leadership within the organization.

When I became a Secret Service agent in 1983, we were generally well led. Most of our top and mid-level supervisors were armed forces veterans; they managed and led by the ethos of military leadership, which dictates accomplishing the mission while taking care of those entrusted to

them. They expected much from their subordinates but knew that they must set the example we would follow.

The Secret Service of today is awash in managers, not leaders. Many supervisors have little tangible or leadership experience, yet they are designated as managers on the basis of their titles and long lists of schools attended. Alas, leadership cannot be taught in a classroom alone. In the military, people must first pass Officer Candidate School before assuming leadership roles. In the federal government, more often than not, people are promoted first and then trained to be leaders — the concept is entirely backward.

In December, the Department of Homeland Security's inspector general issued a report finding no evidence that "misconduct is widespread" in the Secret Service. Though it was dismissed as a whitewash by some critics, I view the findings to be quite correct. The problem of leadership, however, stems in part from the department's oversight of the Secret Service.

From its creation until shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the Secret Service

fell under the Treasury Department, where it operated efficiently and largely unencumbered. After Osama bin Laden attacked America, the Secret Service became part of the Department of Homeland Security — a massive and nightmarish new federal bureaucracy. In this environment, many young and ill-prepared agents were promoted to positions of management far too early in their careers. Today, many of those agents are at the highest levels of the Secret Service.

The tragedy of this horrid and ineffective system is that many highly qualified agents who would be superb leaders are passed over for promotion; they are not in "the club." The result is evident in today's embarrassing headlines.

Can this train wreck be put back on track? Can the Secret Service regain its respect? I believe it can.

But congressional overseers need to agree that there is a massive leadership problem in the agency and start a general purge of some top-level managers through forced retirement. Then the Secret Service should begin a leadership school for entry-level managers, preferably conducted by the military.

Finally, the next director should come from outside the agency, rather than rising up through the agency's file. When drastic changes are needed, it is difficult for someone who is friends with almost everyone in headquarters to make objective decisions. In this case, the agency needs someone with no allegiances to top-level managers.

The best leaders willingly take responsibility for actions of the rank and file. When I was a 23-year-old second lieutenant with the 1st Marine Division, my first company commander informed me that he would hold me responsible for everything my men did or failed to do. His hard lesson: It is the commander who bears the ultimate responsibility for his subordinates' actions. This lesson seems to be unique to the military, though it should apply nonuniformed government workers, too.

Dan Emmett, a former Marine Corps captain, retired Secret Service agent and former CIA intelligence officer, is the author of "Within Arm's Length: A Secret Service Agent's Definitive Inside Account of Protecting the President," forthcoming in June. This column first appeared in The Washington Post.

The only thing that unites Arabs is the rejection of Israel

By FRIDA GHITIS

The Miami Herald

Disputes within the Arab world are nothing new, but the depth of animosity and the sheer number of fault lines, rivalries and profound strategic disagreements has reached an all-time high.

The "Arab nation" has never been fully unified. With more than 20 nation-states in the Arab League, competing agendas and ideologies have produced countless wars and contributed to making the Middle East the world's most unstable region. Even before the latest wave of acrimony, recent decades brought Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, a brutal civil war in Lebanon, a Syrian invasion of Lebanon and countless other conflicts.

The Muslim division between Shites and Sunnis, at the root of some of the old conflicts, is still a major source of fighting, but it overlaps and intersects with other problems.

The wave of Arab revolutions that raised the Muslim Brotherhood to power, and then brought it crashing down in some countries, has become the latest incendiary focus, adding to the confusion. In some cases, they have spilled over into battlefields, real and

metaphoric.

Syria has become the arena of combat where tens of thousands are dying and where these differences are played out by armed force. Add to that the issue of Iran, the rift separating Palestinians and a host of other social and political issues. It's not surprising the region is boiling.

Underneath it all are bitter and urgent disagreements over what to do about Iran, a non-Arab, Shiite power, a traditional rival and sometimes enemy of the Arabs. Saudi Arabia wants to see a U.S. attack on Iran, thus bringing an end once and for all to its nuclear program. Iran and its allied Lebanon-based Shiite militia Hezbollah actively support Syrian dictator Bashar Assad. The opposition in Syria is backed by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, but they back different factions of the anti-Assad forces.

In fact, Qatar and Saudi Arabia are increasingly divided. Tiny but wealthy Qatar, a city-state on a small peninsula that juts out of the larger Arabian Peninsula, is at bitter odds with its neighboring Emirates, which are furious at Doha (Qatar's capital) for supporting the Muslim Brotherhood.

Egypt, too, which has become the Muslim Brotherhood's most furious enemy, now also views Qatar as its enemy.

The battle over the future of the Muslim Brotherhood is playing out most dramatically in Egypt. When the Brotherhood rose to power after the overthrow of former President Hosni Mubarak, Qatar became its principal patron. The Qatari network Al-Jazeera became a vocal cheerleader. The Egyptians turned against the Brotherhood and now Egypt is back in the hands of a very popular military-installed regime.

Egypt has gone after the Muslim Brotherhood with unrestrained force, and now Cairo is receiving strong financial backing from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, while Qatar refuses to distance itself from the Islamists. That prompted the Saudis and the UAE to withdraw their ambassadors from Doha last month.

Back in Syria, the anti-Assad opposition includes Islamists of all stripes, who are fighting each other and receiving backing from different capitals, becoming a proxy for some of the conflict across the region. In addition to intra-Islamist fights, there is the moderate opposition, which opposes the Islamists. All the opposition stands against the Tehran and Hezbollah-backed Assad, who relies the ideological and political latticework cutting across the forces seeking to overthrow him.

And then there are the Palestinians. The animosity between Fatah, which dominates the West Bank-governing Palestinian Authority, and Hamas, which rules Gaza, has not eased despite many premature forecasts of reconciliation. And there are several other groups inside the Palestinian territories, including al-Qaida affiliates and Iran-backed militants. Hamas, a Palestinian outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood, is facing Egypt's wrath.

Against this turbulent backdrop, the 22 members of the Arab League will just meet in Kuwait to hold their regular summit. They agreed about almost nothing. Almost.

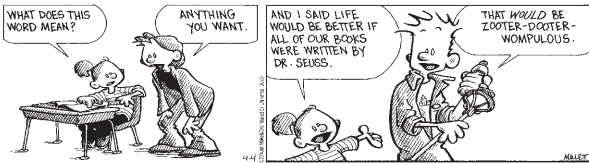
There is one topic that brings the Arab Nation into warm agreement. That is Israel.

A statement on the final day of the Arab League summit announced that the nearly two dozen Arab states "express our total rejection of the call to consider Israel as a Jewish state."

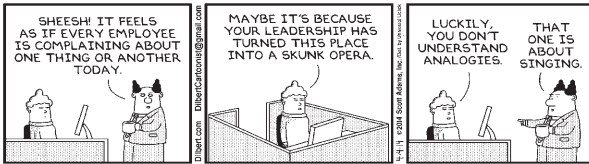
The many people who claimed Israel was at the root of all the problems of the Middle East may want to reconsider. It seems Israel is the one topic capable of producing a semblance of reconciliation among Arabs.

Frida Ghitis writes about global affairs for The Miami Herald. Readers may send her email at fghitis@gmail.com.

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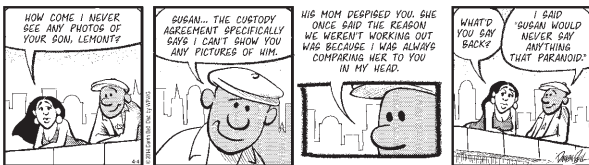
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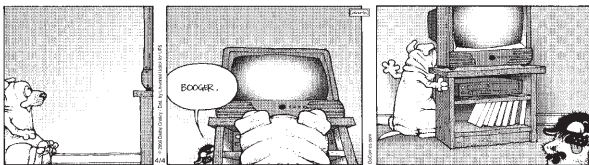
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Get Fuzzy



Doonesbury



Fort Knox



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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49					50					51		

ACROSS

- Blond shade
- Carpet style
- Make booties
- Prompt
- Big brass bellow
- Zilch, south of the border
- Man of 12 labors
- Always
- Pop
- Song of joy
- Stallone hero
- Snitched
- Rue the run
- Enraptured
- That boat
- Sprite

DOWN

- Essen exclamation
- Seek damages
- Discoverer of Uranus
- Learn
- Shake in the grass?
- Honest politician?
- Petrol
- Messages
- Church area
- Concept
- Mountain lake
- Pepsi rival
- Ballet bend
- Grate
- Twice cuatro
- One of Franklin's certainties

- "Metamorphoses" poet
- Ms. Moreno
- Genetics
- Rewrite, maybe
- AKC subjects
- "— Fiction"
- Mourn
- Thrash
- Sanctify
- Wound cover
- Greet silently
- Old Testament prophet
- Get bigger
- Height of fashion?
- Before
- Dove's call
- Junior

Answer to Previous Puzzle

C	O	B	B	S	U	M	A	F	A	R
O	D	O	R	I	F	A	S	E	M	I
M	I	R	O	N	O	R	P	A	I	D
B	E	N	N	I	E	G	A	I	T	
				C	O	W	C	A	T	C
L	E	M	O	N	H	U	E		E	M
A	S	I	S		L	A	X		P	R
M	A	L		F	E	Z		B	A	S
B	U	L	L		D	O	Z	E	R	S
					D	A	R	N	M	A
					D	I	A	Z		I
					A	C	M	E		R
					B	E	S	S		N

4-4

CRYPTOQUIP

B V X U F I B J N D M K O U X A U
A Z M J J C N B X A R U X L M K O D U U N
X L B X L M A K C D K M V Z K B R C

I C V B R C B J C V - A B K N C F.
Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF YOU HAVE KEENLY SHARP VISION LIKE THAT OF A KING OR A PRINCE, I'D CALL YOU REGAL-EYED.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: X equals T

Don't Buy Survival Food... Until You Read This!

Dear Stars & Stripes reader,

There are some people out there who think folks like you and me are a bit "odd".

They think having a stockpile ready for a disaster is something they can put off for "someday" or "never".

But those people are just hiding their heads in the sand. They are dead wrong -- and **you are dead right.**

You've seen the evidence and you know the situation is way too serious not to do something about it. When a crisis hits, you'll be ready. You'll make darn sure your family won't go hungry or get herded into a FEMA camp.

The fact is, if you don't take action or if you stockpile the wrong foods, you could be setting your family up to starve. It sounds harsh, but the truth is too many people with good intentions are making critical mistakes with their food stockpiles.

MISTAKES LIKE...

- Buying MREs (meals ready to eat) with a 5 year shelf life (depending on where you buy them, they could be nearly expired)...
- Getting gross survival foods that taste terrible and are so high in salt, MSG and preservatives you could clog your arteries and get yourself sick...
- Or simply buying the wrong foods and leaving a critical hole in your meal plan, which means your family can become malnourished...



Well, I decided to stop worrying. Obviously, waiting for FEMA to give me a handout in a disaster just wasn't an option for me. And I was completely turned off by the crazy prices of survival food sold by most stores.

So I got in touch with my buddy Frank Bates and put my order in for his Food4Patriots survival food kits. This is Frank's new line of survival food and there are 4 reasons why it's literally flying off the shelves:

- **Food4Patriots is an incredible value.** This high quality survival food is without any fillers or poor-quality "franken-food" that the other guys use to pad their survival meals. They are made and packaged right here in the U.S.A. You won't believe the prices on these kits -- a fraction of the price that other brands charge.
- There's no fancy packaging, it's military-grade sturdy stuff and can stand up to the crazy things that happen in a crisis. This food has a **shelf life of up to 25 years**, so you have complete peace of mind for the long term. And he's using the most compact kits so you can store them anywhere in your home without any extra hassle. They're sturdy, waterproof and stack easily. And extremely covert too.
- You can make these meals in less than 20 minutes; just add boiling water, simmer, and serve. I tried 'em and I think they **taste as good or better than any other survival food I've EVER had.** And you get a whole slew of choices for breakfast, lunch and dinner so you don't get stuck eating the same thing day-in and day-out.
- Frank has come up with some **impressive FREE bonuses** that are **ONLY** available to folks who purchase one of his kits on a first-come, first-served basis. For example, my 3-month kit came with 5,400+ heirloom survival seeds, 4 hard copy books, an 11-in-1 survival tool, and some other cool stuff.



Protect your family in a crisis with 25-year shelf life survival food from getfood18.com

I want to make sure you don't miss out on this because **this is the #1 item to hoard in 2014.**

Here's why... If you don't take action to get your food stockpile right now, you'll be in the same boat as the brainwashed masses who think "everything is fine." And if a crisis hits and your family asks, "What are we going to eat?" your mouth will go dry and you'll feel powerless.

But what if you decide right now to secure your food stockpile instead? **Just imagine how much better you'll feel right away.** And if a crisis hits and your family asks, "What are we going to eat?" you'll calmly reassure them that they're safe and they will have plenty to eat.

Listen, I can't predict the future. I don't know exactly when or how a crisis will hit. But from everything I see, it could be soon and it could be a big one. That's why I really want you to get the same peace of mind that I do.

P.S. Got a call from Frank and you'll never believe this... FEMA and DHS just tried to buy up his entire supply of food! Can you believe that BS?

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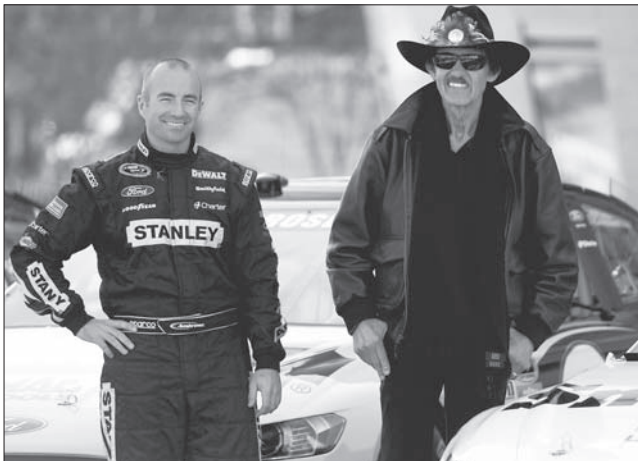
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AUTO RACING



JEFF SILER, CHARLOTTE OBSERVER/MCT

NASCAR Sprint Cup Series driver Marcos Ambrose, left, joined Richard Petty Motorsports in 2012 to drive the No. 43 car made famous by Petty, right, who won 200 races and captured seven NASCAR Cup points titles. It has been 15 years since the legendary No. 43 Ford has been in the winner's circle.

RPM off to a strong start after offseason upgrades

By JENNA FRYER
The Associated Press

RICHARD PETTY, N.C. Richard Petty, still mourning the death of his wife, skipped the short trip to Martinsville Speedway to watch his team compete.

At the track a little over an hour south of Petty's famed race shop, his two drivers set out to capture a victory in honor of the late Lynda Petty and their boss, "The King." Marcos Ambrose and Aric Almirola fell short of driving their way into Victory Lane on Sunday. But for just the fourth time in 77 races as teammates, both Richard Petty Motorsports drivers finished inside the top 10.

Ambrose led 22 laps en route to his season-best finish of fifth and Almirola was eighth. It marked the second time in three races the duo both finished inside the top 10 and showed that RPM has turned a corner in its bid to recapture some of its glory days.

"We have a brand here at our race team and it is Richard Petty Motorsports and it is 'The King' and all that he has accomplished. We want to live up to that," Almirola said. "We want to get back to those successful ways that they have had for so many years. Obviously we have been through some tough times and we are clawing our way back to where we need to be and we see the light now."

Petty, a Hall of Famer, won 200 races and seven championships for Petty Enterprises. The orga-

"This is the one place I have come to drive a race car that made me feel like part of the family."

Aric Almirola

Richard Petty Motorsports driver



nization has won just three races since John Andretti's 1999 victory and had a 10-year losing streak. The organization has not won since 2012, but an offseason commitment from sponsor Smithfield helped RPM add personnel and invest in equipment, testing, and research and development.

Those gains have been evident through the first six races of the season. Ambrose is 14th and Almirola is 26th, in part because of two accidents Almirola was involved in. Each driver has two top-10 finishes, Ambrose has two top fives and Almirola finished a career-best third at Bristol.

It's the best start in seven Sprint Cup seasons for Ambrose and it comes a year after Almirola raced out of the gates, when RPM was ill-equipped to have both teams competing at the same level.

Ambrose credits the increased commitment to testing and the development of his relationship with crew chief Drew Blickensderfer, who joined RPM in late 2012, and spent this past offseason making personnel moves that have

strengthened the team.

Almirola has a new crew chief in Trent Owens, Petty's nephew, who guided Kyle Larson in the Nationwide Series last season at Turner Scott Motorsports.

"He was being courted by a few other teams, but we were able to get it done and we got him over here on our team and I feel like we stole the best crew chief out of the Nationwide garage," Almirola said.

If RPM can sustain this performance, win a race or two and maybe even a berth in the Chase for the Sprint Cup championship, the drivers believe it would be a significant payback to Petty.

"This is the one place I have come to drive a race car that made me feel like part of the family," Almirola said. "That is the way they run their operation and race team. It has been a family run business since the '40s and '50s and it is still that way today. Richard comes in here and puts his arm around everybody and makes them feel like they are a part of the Petty family."

Around the track

SPRINT CUP

This week: Duck Commander 500 at Fort Worth, Texas

TV: AFN-Xtra, 9 p.m. Sunday CET; 4 a.m. Monday JKT

Track: Texas Motor Speedway (oval, 1.5 miles).

Race distance: 501 miles, 334 laps.

Last year: Kyle Busch won to complete a Cup-Nationwide weekend sweep.

Last week: Stewart-Hess' Kurt Busch won at Martinsville for his 25th victory, taking the lead from Jimmie Johnson with 10 laps to go. Busch snapped an 83-race victory drought.

Fact fact: The record for the most races at the start of the season without a repeat winner is 10 in 2000.

Next race: Southern 500, April 12, Darlington Raceway, Darlington, S.C.

Online: www.nascar.com

—The Associated Press

Driver standings

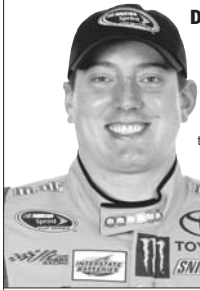
1. Dale Earnhardt Jr.	227
2. Matt Kenseth	218
3. Carl Edwards	217
4. Jeff Gordon	216
5. Jimmie Johnson	209
6. Kyle Busch	189
7. Brad Keselowski	188
8. Joey Logano	187
9. Austin Dillon	179
10. Ryan Newman	174
11. Paul Menard	168
12. Denny Hamlin	165
13. Brian Vickers	165
14. Marcos Ambrose	162
15. Tony Stewart	154
16. A.J. Allmendinger	152
17. Clint Bowyer	150
18. Greg Biffle	149
19. Kyle Larson	148
20. Kurt Busch	146

Driver to watch

Kyle Busch is looking to become the first two-time winner in the Sprint Cup series this season. His victory last year in Texas was the first at the 1.5-mile track for Toyota.

That bodes well for 'Rowdy' entering Sunday. In 2013, Busch also won at Auto Club to give Toyota its first victory at that track.

Busch won again at Fontana two weeks ago, so if the trend holds true, Busch, sixth in points this year, will be in Victory Lane at Texas again.



NATIONWIDE SERIES

This week: O'Reilly Auto Parts 300 in Fort Worth.

TV: AFN-Xtra, 2:30 a.m. Saturday CET; 9:30 a.m. Saturday JKT

Track: Texas Motor Speedway (oval, 1.5 miles).

Race distance: 300 miles, 200 laps.

Last year: Kyle Busch won at the track for the sixth time in the series. He also won the Sprint Cup race.

Last race: Kyle Larson raced to his first Nationwide victory March 22 at Fontana. Next race: VFW Sport Clips Help A Hero 200, April 11, Darlington Raceway, Darlington, S.C.

Online: www.nascar.com

CAMPING WORLD TRUCK

Next race: North Carolina Education Lottery 200, May 16, Charlotte Motor Speedway, Concord, N.C.

Last week: Defending series champion Matt Crafton won the rain-delayed race at Martinsville for his fourth career victory. Darrell Wallace was second.

Online: www.nascar.com

NHRA MELLO YELLO DRAG RACING

Next event: NHRA Four-Wide Nationals, April 11-13, zMAX Dragway, Concord, N.C.

Last week: Alexis DeJoria won in Funny Car and Erica Enders-Stevens topped the Pro Stock field in Las Vegas for the second female double in NHRA history. Tony Schumacher won in Top Fuel for his division-record 73rd win and eighth at Las Vegas.

Online: www.nhra.com

VERIZON INDYCAR

Next race: Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach, April 13, Streets of Long Beach, Long Beach, Calif.

Last week: Team Penske's Will Power won the season-opening race in St. Petersburg, Fla., holding off Ryan Hunter-Reay. Power has won four of the series' last six races.

Online: www.indycar.com

FORMULA ONE

This week: Bahrain Grand Prix at Sakhir, Bahrain.

Track: Bahrain International Circuit (road course, 3.36 miles).

Race distance: 191.53 miles, 57 laps.

Last year: Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel won for the second straight year, easily beating Lotus' Kimi Raikkonen.

Last week: Lewis Hamilton won the Malaysian Grand Prix, beating teammate Nico Rosberg, in the Mercedes team's first 1-2 finish since 1955.

Next race: Chinese Grand Prix, April 20, Shanghai International Circuit.

Online: www.formula1.com

OTHER RACES

WORLD OF OUTLAWS

Sprint Car: Saturday-Sunday, Calisto Speedway, Calistoga, Calif. Late Model: Illini 100, Saturday, Farmer City Raceway, Farmer City, Ill. Online: www.worldofoutlaws.com

U.S. AUTO RACING CLUB

Silver Crown, Sumner Classic, Sunday, Terre Haute Action Track, Terre Haute, Ind. Sprint Car: Saturday, Lawrenceburg Speedway, Lawrenceburg, Ind. Online: www.usacracing.com

MLB

Scoreboard

American League

East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	2	1	.667	—
Baltimore	1	1	.500	½
Boston	1	1	.500	½
Tampa Bay	1	2	.333	1
New York	0	2	.000	1½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	2	0	1.000	—
Detroit	2	0	1.000	—
Cleveland	2	1	.667	½
Kansas City	0	2	.000	2
Minnesota	0	2	.000	2
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	2	0	1.000	—
Houston	2	0	1.000	½
Texas	1	1	.500	1
Oakland	1	2	.333	2
Los Angeles	0	3	.000	3

National League

East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Washington	2	0	1.000	—
Atlanta	1	1	.500	½
Miami	2	1	.667	½
Philadelphia	1	2	.333	1½
New York	0	2	.000	2
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Pittsburgh	2	0	1.000	—
Cincinnati	1	1	.500	1
St. Louis	1	1	.500	1
Milwaukee	1	2	.333	1½
Chicago	0	2	.000	2
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	4	1	.800	—
San Francisco	3	1	.750	½
Colorado	1	2	.333	2
San Diego	1	2	.333	2
Arizona	1	4	.200	3

Wednesday's games

Detroit 2, Kansas City 1, 10 innings
 Chicago White Sox 7, Minnesota 6, 11 innings
 Oakland 6, Cleveland 1, 1st game
 Boston 6, Baltimore 2
 Toronto 3, Tampa Bay 0
 Texas 4, Philadelphia 3
 Houston 3, N.Y. Yankees 1
 Cleveland 6, Oakland 4, 2nd game
 Seattle 6, L.A. Angels 2
 Atlanta 1, Milwaukee 0
 Pittsburgh 4, Chicago Cubs 3, 16th inning
 Cincinnati 1, St. Louis 0
 Washington 5, N.Y. Mets 1
 San Francisco 2, Arizona 0
 L.A. Dodgers 5, San Diego 1



KATHY KRONICK/AP

Washington's Bryce Harper, left, and Jayson Werth celebrate victory over the New York Mets on Wednesday in New York. The Nationals host Atlanta for a three-game series this weekend.

Thursday's games

Kansas City at Detroit
 Minnesota at Chicago White Sox
 Boston at Baltimore
 Toronto at Tampa Bay
 N.Y. Yankees at Houston
 Seattle at Oakland
 Chicago Cubs at Pittsburgh
 St. Louis at Cincinnati
 Colorado at Miami
 Washington at N.Y. Mets
 San Francisco at Arizona

Friday's games

Baltimore (McGowan 0-0) at Detroit (Porcillo 0-0)
 Milwaukee (Estrada 0-0) at Boston (Peay 0-0)
 Minnesota (Pelfrey 0-0) at Cleveland (Salazar 0-0)
 Chicago White Sox (EJohnson 0-0) at Kansas City (Guthrie 0-0)
 N.Y. Yankees (Tanaka 0-0) at Toronto (McGowan 0-0)
 Texas (Saunders 0-0) at Tampa Bay (Odorizzi 0-0)

L.A. Angels (Richards 0-0) at Houston (Harrell 0-0)
 Seattle (C.Young 0-0) at Oakland (Strally 0-0)
 Atlanta (Hale 0-0) at Washington (Roark 0-0)
 Philadelphia (R.Hernandez 0-0) at Chicago Cubs (T.Wood 0-0)
 Arizona (Delgado 0-0) at Colorado (Nicasio 0-0)
 San Francisco (Vogelsong 0-0) at L.A. Dodgers (Ryu 1-0)
 St. Louis (Miller 0-0) at Pittsburgh (Cole 0-0)
 Cincinnati (Leake 0-0) at N.Y. Mets (Mejia 0-0)
 San Diego (Stults 0-0) at Miami (Koeber 0-0)

Saturday's games

Minnesota at Cleveland
 N.Y. Yankees at Toronto
 Baltimore at Detroit
 Chicago White Sox at Kansas City
 Seattle at Oakland
 L.A. Angels at Houston
 Milwaukee at Boston
 Texas at Tampa Bay
 Cincinnati at N.Y. Mets
 Philadelphia at Chicago Cubs
 San Francisco at L.A. Dodgers
 Atlanta at Washington
 St. Louis at Pittsburgh
 San Diego at Miami
 Arizona at Colorado

Atlanta won't rush pitchers

Braves keeping eye on minor league starts by Minor, Floyd, Santana

BY CHARLES ODUM

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Some of the Atlanta Braves' most important pitching performances this week will come in the minor leagues.

Mike Minor, Gavin Floyd and Ervin Santana are scheduled to pitch in minor league games on Thursday and Friday. The three starters are moving closer to joining an Atlanta rotation severely depleted by season-ending elbow injuries to Kris Medlen and Brandon Beachy this spring.

Minor, returning from a sore shoulder, was pitching for Double-A Mississippi on Thursday. Floyd, whose 2013 season with the White Sox was shortened by elbow surgery, was to start Thursday for Triple-A Gwinnett at Durham, N.C.

Santana will start for Gwinnett on Friday in what is expected to be his final minor league game. He had a late start to spring training after signing with Atlanta on March 12.

Braves general manager Frank Ren said Wednesday the three must show they can pitch at least six innings before they can move up to the majors. Santana is expected to reach that standard on Friday. Minor and Floyd could need at least two or three more starts as they hope to build up their necessary innings by late April.

Despite the injuries to Medlen and Beachy, Wren said the team will remain patient with Minor, Floyd and Santana.

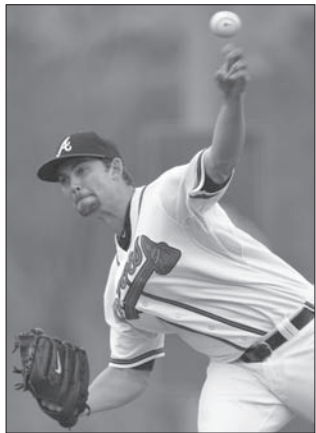
"We're not going to rush any of these guys back," Wren said. "They're going to come back when they're ready based on our normal buildup of spring training. We're not going to shorten that. We're really focused on the long haul."

The Braves opened the season with a four-man rotation of Julio Teheran, Alex Wood, Aaron Harang and David Hale. Teheran gave up two runs and Wood allowed only one run as the Braves split their first two games with the Brewers in Milwaukee.

"We were definitely dealt some setbacks during spring training, but we've always had confidence in our young pitchers," Wren said. "We felt like they could help us stay in this and not lose too much ground the first two or three weeks as we wait for some of our veteran guys to get healthy and get settled and in the case of Santana, just get stretched out."

Minor could throw three innings for Mississippi after he was impressive in a rain-shortened exhibition start against a team of the Braves' top minor league players on Saturday. He was scheduled to pitch two innings and was perfect in 1½ innings.

The left-hander underwent urinary tract surgery on Dec. 31 and then had shoulder tendinitis in



DAVID TULLS/AP

Braves starting pitcher Mike Minor delivers during the first inning of an exhibition baseball game against Atlanta's minor leaguers on Saturday. Minor might need a few more starts before he is brought back to help Atlanta's ailing rotation.

Florida.

Minor, a 13-game winner in 2013, said he didn't feel more was expected of him because Medlen and Beachy are lost for the season.

"No, I don't feel any added pressure," Minor said. "It's kind of the same thing. I just want to go out and there and win and do my best and hope everything else falls into place."

Assistant general manager Bruce Mano said the emphasis is on good health in the minor league games.

"The main thing is they go out and they get their work and get through it healthy," Mano said before Wednesday's game in Milwaukee. "In Santana's case, obviously, get stretched out a little more to be ready to come back here."

AP freelance writer Tom Kertscher in Milwaukee contributed to this report.



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NBA

Culture warrior

Behind Jefferson, Bobcats appear to have turned corner on franchise's losing ways

By STEVE REED
The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Al Jefferson isn't surprised the Bobcats are on the brink of clinching an NBA playoff spot.

And the veteran center doesn't think this Charlotte team is a one-year wonder.

"We've got a long way to go, but we can be one of the elite teams in the East," Jefferson said.

When Jefferson signed a three-year, \$40.5 million free agent contract last July he insisted he wasn't coming to Charlotte just to collect a paycheck. He wanted to help change what had become a losing culture.

So far, so good.

The Bobcats (37-38) have the seventh-best record in the Eastern Conference. They're 4½ games ahead of the ninth-place Atlanta Hawks as can wrap up their first playoff berth since 2010 by winning four of their final eight games.

Jefferson has been an integral part of the turnaround, averaging 21.5 points and 10.4 rebounds per game this season.

Charlotte also has benefited from the maturation of third-year point guard Kemba Walker and some unexpected contributions from unheralded role players Chris Douglas-Roberts and Anthony Tolliver.

The Bobcats are hardly a dominating force, but first-year coach Steve Clifford seems to have his team headed in the right direction.

"I thought this could happen for us if we worked for it," Jefferson said. "I couldn't tell you when I signed that we were going to be here in a playoff run, but I knew that if we locked into what coach wanted us to do and committed and dedicated ourselves to this team, that we were going to have a chance."

Clifford has preached defense — and his players have listened.

Charlotte is allowing 97.5 points per game, the sixth-fewest in the NBA. That's a dramatic improvement from the previous year, when the Bobcats allowed the second-most points in the league.

Clifford said the key now is for players to avoid complacency.

Clifford suggested before Monday night's win over Washington that his players were too busy focusing on what they've already done rather than what's ahead.

"I feel a sense of achievement within our team that shouldn't be there," Clifford said Monday night. "I wouldn't say there is complacency, but we have played with good effort all year and I think right now every player is telling me that a good job they have done and their minds weren't in

'I thought this could happen for us if we worked for it. I couldn't tell you when I signed that we were going to be here in a playoff run, but I knew that if we locked into what coach wanted us to do and committed and dedicated ourselves to this team, that we were going to have a chance.'

Al Jefferson
Charlotte Bobcats center

Big Al by the numbers

21.5

Points per game this season for Bobcats' center Al Jefferson. Jefferson has also averaged 10.4 rebounds per game.

97.5

Points allowed per game by Charlotte, sixth-fewest in the NBA. Last season, sans Jefferson, the Bobcats were second-worst.

4½

Games ahead of the ninth-place Hawks for the East's final playoff spot. Charlotte can clinch by winning four of its final eight games.

SOURCE: The Associated Press

the right place."

He said that might have contributed to a loss to Orlando last week.

After Clifford's talk with players the Bobcats responded with a 100-94 win over Washington, pulling within two games of John Wall and the Wizards for the sixth seed in the East.

"They're a pesky group, a good defensive team," Wizards coach Randy Wittman said. "They've put themselves in a position to make some noise in the postseason."

What resonates most with Clifford is his team's fight.

He pointed to the back-to-the-wall victory over Washington, a game in which the Bobcats overcame an 11-point fourth quarter deficit to win.

"They say you play your best when your best is needed," Clifford said. "I really like how our guys came out and fought in the second half. ... They had us on our heels and we could have quit. We regrouped individually at halftime and we played a good second half."



Here's a look at some of the biggest games left in the East playoff race:

APRIL 8, BROOKLYN AT MIAMI:

The Heat beat all 29 other clubs last season. They've beaten 28 of the 29 this season, with the Nets the lone exception. Brooklyn is 3-0 against the Heat, winning twice by a single point and the other time in double-overtime. Mentally, Miami will need this one, especially if these two meet up in the conference semifinals or finals.

APRIL 9, CHARLOTTE AT WASHINGTON: This game could go a long way toward shoring up the bottom half of the East bracket. And the Wizards might still be smarting from blowing a 16-point second-half lead in what became a 100-94 loss in Charlotte on Monday.

APRIL 11, INDIANA AT MIAMI: This doesn't need much explanation. Two teams that don't like each other, either playing for seeding or sending one last message before the playoffs.

APRIL 15, NEW YORK AT BROOKLYN: This could turn out to be a game the Knicks absolutely have to have to get into the postseason. Can't imagine the Nets enjoying anything more than dashing those plans.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
y-Miami	52	22	.703	—
y-Indiana	53	23	.697	—
x-Toronto	43	32	.573	9½
x-Chicago	43	32	.573	9½
x-Brooklyn	40	34	.541	12
x-Washington	39	36	.520	13½
Charlotte	37	38	.493	15½
New York	33	43	.434	20
Atlanta	32	42	.432	20
Cleveland	31	45	.408	22
Detroit	27	48	.360	25½
Boston	23	52	.307	29½
Orlando	21	54	.279	31½
Philadelphia	16	59	.213	36½
Milwaukee	14	61	.187	38½

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
y-San Antonio	59	16	.787	—
y-Oklahoma City	54	19	.740	4
y-L.A. Clippers	54	22	.711	5½
Houston	49	25	.662	9½
Portland	49	27	.645	10½
Golden State	46	29	.613	13
Dallas	44	31	.587	15
Memphis	44	31	.587	15
Phoenix	44	31	.587	15
Minnesota	37	37	.500	21½
Denver	32	42	.440	26
New Orleans	32	43	.427	27
Sacramento	27	48	.360	32
L.A. Lakers	25	50	.333	34
Utah	23	52	.307	36

x-clinched playoff spot

y-clinched division

Tuesday's games

Brooklyn 105, Houston 106

Golden State 122, Dallas 120, OT

Portland 124, L.A. Lakers 112

Wednesday's games

Cleveland 119, Orlando 98

Indiana 101, Detroit 106

Washington 118, Boston 92

Charlotte 123, Philadelphia 93

New York 107, Miami 103

Toronto 107, Houston 101

Miami 96, Milwaukee 77

Chicago 105, Atlanta 92

Minnesota 102, Memphis 88

San Antonio 111, Golden State 90

Denver 137, New Orleans 107

L.A. Clippers 112, Phoenix 108

Sacramento 107, L.A. Lakers 102

Thursday's games

San Antonio at Oklahoma City

Dallas at L.A. Clippers

Friday's games

Denver at Memphis

Indiana at Toronto

Orlando at Charlotte

Detroit at Brooklyn

Philadelphia at Boston

Charlotte at Miami

Cleveland at Atlanta

Washington at New York

Milwaukee at Chicago

New Orleans at Utah

Oklahoma City at Houston

Phoenix at Portland

Sacramento at Golden State

Dallas at L.A. Lakers



CHUCK BURTON/AP

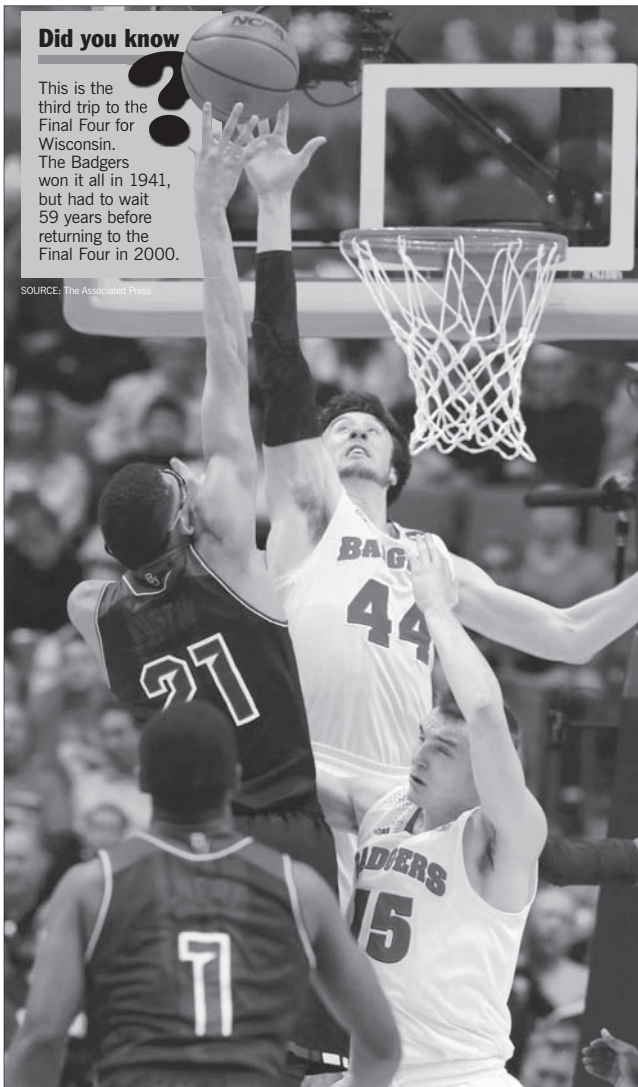
The Bobcats' Cody Zeller, top left, and Al Jefferson, top right, try to take the ball away from the Wizards' Al Harrington last Monday. Jefferson has helped key a defensive revival in Charlotte, which is giving up the sixth-fewest points per game in the NBA.

NCAA TOURNAMENT: FINAL FOUR

Did you know

This is the third trip to the Final Four for Wisconsin. The Badgers won it all in 1941, but had to wait 59 years before returning to the Final Four in 2000.

SOURCE: The Associated Press



ROBERT GAUTHER, LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT

Wisconsin junior center Frank Kaminsky, middle, blocks the shot of Baylor's Isaiah Austin during the first half of their West Region semifinal at the Honda Center in Anaheim, Calif., on March 27.

Kaminsky tall task for Cats

Badgers center presents problems

By GARY B. GRAVES
The Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. Kentucky faces a Texas-sized task defending Wisconsin 7-footer Frank Kaminsky, and not just because he's the tallest player the Wildcats have faced in the NCAA tournament.

The Wisconsin junior's ability to score inside and outside forces the Wildcats (28-10) to keep a body on him near the basket and deny on the perimeter.

Increasing the challenge for Kentucky's frontcourt is the absence of 7-footer Willie Cauley-Stein, who's sidelined by an ankle injury. With Cauley-Stein out, Kentucky will turn to 7-0 freshman center Dakari Johnson — who has developed into an inside presence during the post-season — and Marcus Lee.

Still, nothing the Wildcats have seen matches the threat posed by Kaminsky, named the West Region's most outstanding player after his 28-point, 11-rebound performance in Saturday's overtime win against Arizona.

Even Kentucky coach John Calipari had to ponder his answer to the first question at Tuesday's media session — about Kaminsky.

"Oooh. ... tough matchup for us," he said. "Really skilled. ... He's going to be a handful. Wish we had Willie."

That's because of how the 234-pound Kaminsky quietly positions himself to score from all over the floor for Wisconsin (30-7). He has a sleepy-eyed look, laid-back demeanor and doesn't appear to be that mobile.

Johnson said he isn't fooled. "We're going to have to play him as a whole team," Johnson said Tuesday. "He may not be as smooth, but he's faster than he looks. We really have to do a great defensive job against him, not just individually but as a team."

Kaminsky fits perfectly in

Wisconsin's deliberate offensive scheme, where he creates multiple dangers for defenders. Besides using his size near the rim for rebounds and second-chance baskets, he can slip out beyond the arc and burn teams who fail to account for him.

Against Arizona, Kaminsky made 3 of 5 long-range attempts and 11 of 20 from the field in the regional final.

Calipari said Kentucky will miss Cauley-Stein's versatility with his ability to protect the rim and defend outside. He believes Johnson and Lee are up to the challenge of slowing down Kaminsky because of how both have played in the tournament.

Johnson has 23 points and nine rebounds the past two games. Lee came off the bench in Sunday's Midwest Region final against Michigan and had 10 points and eight rebounds in 15 minutes.

Their efforts helped Kentucky reach the Final Four. To get to the title game, Johnson, Lee and Julius Randle must contain Kaminsky while keeping an eye on his Badgers teammates.

"We just have to go out and play like we always do, just defend hard," Lee said. "We can't just one focus on one player because it's the team, not one player that can win."

Wisconsin coach Bo Ryan is driving a similar point home to his players when it comes to Kentucky's talented freshmen. The Wildcats' length, quickness and ability present matchup issues for his Badgers.

Ryan hopes Kaminsky can assert himself in a game Ryan believes might be decided in the paint.

"We know we have a couple guys that can score around the basket," Ryan said Monday, "but we also know there are defenders out there that can do a pretty good job of stopping them. ...

"The question will always be, how many touches, how many offensive opportunities on second-chance points will each team get? It will definitely be a battle 10 feet and in, that's for sure."

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NCAA TOURNAMENT: FINAL FOUR



JOHN BAZEMORE/AP

Florida guard Scottie Wilbekin made the most of his second chance with coach Billy Donovan, averaging 16.8 points in the No. 1 seed's four tournament games.

Wilbekin making most of another chance

Florida senior peaks at perfect time after return from second suspension

Did you know

BY MARK LONG
The Associated Press

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — Scottie Wilbekin waved off teammates, ignored signals from the bench and backed down his defender as the final seconds ticked off the clock.

Wilbekin pulled up, swished a three-pointer from well behind the arc and raised his arms triumphantly as he jogged to the locker room for halftime in the South Regional final.

It was a game-changing shot against Dayton — one that should have surprised no one.

Wilbekin has become one of the best closers in college basketball, delivering clutch shots and defensive stops in crunch time for the top-seeded Gators (36-2). He's been called the best all-around point guard in the country, and it's hard to argue considering how he's played in the NCAA tournament.

The 6-foot-2 senior is averaging a team-high 16.8 points in four tournament games. He also has 12 assists, eight rebounds, six steals and just two turnovers. Throw in his defense — he frustrated Albany's Peter Hooley, Pittsburgh's James Robinson and Dayton's Jordan Silber — and it's clear that coach Billy Donovan's

‘People get a chance maybe to see him grow as a player. I got a chance to see him grow as a person.’

Billy Donovan
Florida coach

decision to give Wilbekin one final chance has been a huge key to Florida's success.

"It's been one of the great experiences for me as a coach going through what he and I have gone through together," Donovan said.

Wilbekin could have his hands full in the Final Four on Saturday night. Not only will he be tasked with directing Florida's offense, but he also will be the primary defender on All-American guard Shabazz Napier of Connecticut.

Napier scored 26 points in the teams' first meeting this season, and six of those came in the final minute with Wilbekin in the locker room with a sprained ankle. The Gators sorely missed him down the stretch in the one-point loss.

It was a glimpse of where Florida would be without the Gainesville native.

Donovan suspended Wilbekin indefinitely last June for a violation of team rules. It was

Wilbekin's second suspension in seven months, and Donovan even suggested that Wilbekin transfer to get a fresh start elsewhere.

But after a few days contemplating his future, Wilbekin asked for another chance. Donovan insisted Wilbekin move back home with his parents — his father is a team pastor at a local high school — and work to "regain credibility" with the team. Wilbekin responded better than Donovan expected.

"People get a chance maybe to see him grow as a player. I got a chance to see him grow as a person," Donovan said. "It was a struggle and a battle."

Donovan reinstated Wilbekin after the first five games of the season, a punishment that may have cost Florida in a loss at Wisconsin but paid long-term dividends.

"He had lost all his credibility, so I tried to put him in a situation where he could show his commitment to the rest of those guys,"

Donovan said. "He is a kid that learned some valuable lessons. ... He's a guy that loves challenges, and what I was presenting in front of him was a real, real challenge because I'd kind of painted a picture that said, 'I don't believe you can do it or will do it.' I said, 'Time will tell.' And I think he thrived on that."

The Southeastern Conference player of the year has grown tired of talking about the suspension, but recognizes it's become a feel-good story with Florida advancing in the tournament.

"Sometimes I feel like there's so much out there that it doesn't need to be asked anymore and I don't know how I can answer it in a different way," Wilbekin said. "But I understand it because I guess it's a good story that I was suspended and now I've won some awards at the end of the year."

Added teammate Michael Frazier II: "He's definitely grown a lot just from where he was in the summer to now. I'm very proud of how much he's grown as a person as well as a player."

Wilbekin and the Gators would rather talk about all his clutch plays, like how he took over down the stretch against Pittsburgh in the tournament or hit huge shot after huge shot in wins at Arkan-

Florida's last loss came Dec. 2, when the then-No. 12 Huskies beat the then-No. 15 Gators 65-64 in Storrs, Conn.

SOURCE: gatorzone.com

sas in January, at Kentucky and at Tennessee in February or against Dayton in the regional final.

"He's got an enormous amount of confidence in himself," Donovan said. "But there are guys that can have that kind of confidence and not have a real good awareness of what the defense does and then you've got other guys open for shots, that's not good, you know? And there are certain guys that have an ego that they want to take the last shot. They want to be the hero."

"A lot of times taking the last shot may or may not be the right play. ... You've got to have a good awareness when the ball is in your hands of being able to make these kind of decisions. I think for Scottie he's done a real, real good job of balancing both."

NCAA TOURNAMENT: FINAL FOUR

Connecticut Huskies
head coach Kevin Ollie

RICHARD MESSINA,
HARTFORD COURANT/MCT

Renewable resources

Calhoun, Auriemma give UConn's Ollie wealth of experience to call on

BY PAT EATON-ROBB
The Associated Press

WHEN Connecticut men's basketball coach Kevin Ollie has a question about coaching, he can usually just walk down the hall at Gampel Pavilion or hit the speed dial on his phone to get the answer.

Hall of Famer's Jim Calhoun and Geno Auriemma have won 11 national championships between them and Ollie counts both among his friends and close advisers.

"I use both of them," Ollie said Monday as he began preparing to coach in his first Final Four. "It's just a great relationship I have with Geno, but it's a very special relationship I have with coach (Calhoun)."

The 71-year-old Calhoun recruited Ollie as point guard out of Los Angeles, hired him as an assistant in 2010, and strongly recommended him to become his successor when he retired after the 2011-12 season.

Calhoun still attends some practices and games, sitting

now at a press table on the baseline, rather than pacing the sidelines. He helps Ollie with player evaluations, recruiting and any administrative issues he may have a question about.

Ollie said Calhoun also is in his ear reminding him not to let the job overwhelm him and to find time for his wife and children. The two shared a long embrace Sunday night after the Huskies 60-54 upset win over Michigan State.

"He's just a great resource to have," Ollie said. "I'd be a fool if I didn't use it."

Ollie also bends the ear of Auriemma. The two have a bond that never existed between the women's coach and Calhoun. They talk almost every day. They occasionally have dinner, or go golfing and pick each other's brains about basketball.

"Both of them are different people,"

Ollie said of the two Hall of Famers. "But they both have the same mindset, a winning mindset, a championship level mindset."

Auriemma said their conversations are only occasionally about basketball, but when they are, they focus a lot on philosophy and winning.

"A lot of time it's just about mindsets," he said last week. "How do you get players to be in the right frame of mind?"

Auriemma and Calhoun both say Ollie needs little help when it comes to Xs and Os. Ollie spent 13 seasons bouncing around the NBA with 11 teams, soaking everything in. It was an internship at the highest level of basketball, Calhoun said.

"From Day One, Kevin has always been very careful about wanting to maintain his program," Calhoun said. "As well he should. You can't run something for somebody else. I have never done that, nor will I, and Kevin will never want me to. But, I'm there for him."

Auriemma said it's been remarkable to watch Ollie coach, especially when the games are on the line.

"You think he hasn't coached long enough to really handle those situations," he said. "He has handled almost every one of them in textbook style. It helps when almost every guy on your staff has been a head coach, but he has really been impressive."

Ollie's staff isn't just experienced; all of them have ties to UConn and Calhoun. They include assistants Karl Hobbs, a former UConn guard who coached at George Washington and Glen Miller, who played for Calhoun at Northeastern. Kevin Freeman and Ricky Moore were on UConn's 1999 national title team.

They all stress the same thing, toughness, defense, and putting your best player in a position to win the game, Calhoun said. That means even when Calhoun is not in Ollie's ear, his philosophy is still at work.

Ollie is closer in age to his players and relates to them differently. He uses more positive reinforcement than his predecessor and doesn't have nearly as quick a hook when a player makes a mistake.

"He's a great man, and I use him," Ollie said of Calhoun. "But at the end of the day, I have to build this program on what I believe in and my structure. And most of the things I believe in, coach believes in, so it makes it a lot easier."

Did you know

The UConn men's and women's



teams have reached the Final Four in the same season for the fourth time this year.

SOURCE: The Associated Press

NCAA TOURNAMENT: FINAL FOUR

Wisconsin on guard

By the numbers
73.5

Average number of points Wisconsin is scoring per game this season.

63.7

Average number of points opponents are scoring per game this season.

.741

Percentage of free throws Wisconsin is making this season.

SOURCE: The Associated Press

Stable backcourt leads Badgers

By TAMMY MADSEN
The Associated Press

Thirty-seven games this season for Wisconsin and no changes in the starting lineup.

The Badgers have been a model of consistency in their run to the Final Four thanks in large part to their three-man backcourt.

The contributions and leadership of senior Ben Brust, and juniors Josh Gasser and Traevon Jackson have yielded benefits time and again for Wisconsin (30-7), which plays Kentucky in an NCAA tournament semifinal on Saturday at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

Brust is the team's scoring leader, averaging 12.8 points per game. Gasser, who guards the opponent's top scorers, was named to the Big Ten Conference All-Defensive team. Gasser came back strong following his return to the lineup after surgery to repair a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee.

Jackson's readiness was uncertain, but he has been solid at point guard and has come up with big baskets in crucial game situations several times this season.

"Those guys have really developed and they played well together," associate head coach Greg Gard said. "I think our chemistry and how they meshed" was important.

But having the same starting five all year long wasn't necessarily the plan. The emergence of freshman forward Nigel Hayes during Big Ten play could have led to an adjustment.

"You start the year wondering, how long were we going to play three guards? Was it going to be until Nigel got ready?" Gard said. "It ended up being that it played to our advantage the whole year and it's been a good thing."

Jackson has averaged 12.8 points, 5.5 rebounds and 4.5 assists per game in four NCAA tournament games. His confidence wavered during the season when he fell into a mini-shooting slump, but Gard said he has been impressed by Jackson's perseverance, especially in pushing past a rough sophomore year.

"I thought if he got through that and was all in one piece when all was said and done, and pointed in the right direction, that he was really going to reap the benefits of it down the road," Gard said. "He still sometimes gets off the track a little bit, but at times, that boldness and that bravado helps him make plays."

He's also getting to the foul line, having made 17 of 19 attempts in the tournament.

The media attention increases each round of the

NCAAs, though Jackson and Gasser both

said they haven't felt the added pressure.


MARK J. TERRILL/AP

Wisconsin guard Ben Brust is the team's scoring leader, averaging 12.8 points.

Wisconsin coach Bo Ryan tries to maintain a strict regimen with repetition in practice, and game preparation has been a critical component to the Badgers' mindset.

Gasser said he believes whichever team handles the off-court pressure better maintains an edge when the game tips off.

"Once the game starts, all the media, all the nonsense throughout the week, it's kind of thrown out the window," Gasser said. "Coach Ryan prepares us the same for any game. It doesn't matter if it's now in April or it's back in November."

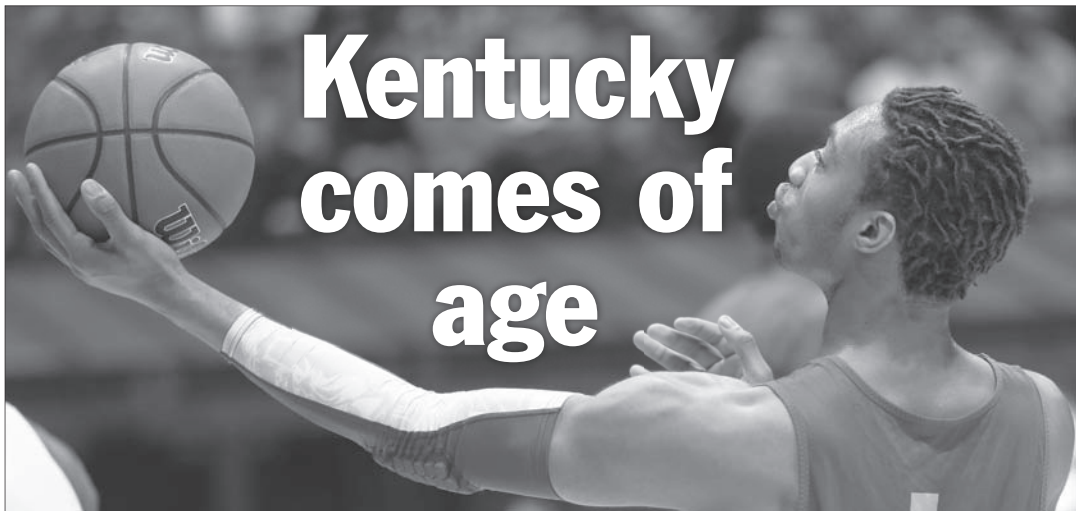


Wisconsin's Josh Gasser, right, tries to drive past Arizona's Gabe York.

JAC C. HONG/AP

NCAA TOURNAMENT: FINAL FOUR

Kentucky comes of age



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

After struggling all year to live up their preseason No. 1 ranking, the Wildcats, and guard James Young, above, enter Saturday playing their best basketball of the season.

Calapari's young Cats finding stride at just the right time

By GARY B. GRAVES
The Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky.

Kentucky's remarkable run this postseason demonstrates that it really is more important how you finish than how you start.

The Wildcats were expected to be brief postseason participants after beginning the month losing two of three Southeastern Conference games and falling out of the Top 25 heading into the league tournament. Kentucky (28-10) has won six of its last seven to reach its third Final Four in four years.

The way Kentucky stumbled into the postseason, not many expected the young Wildcats to put together this surprising NCAA tournament run.

While the Wildcats started the season No. 1 as a collection of talented individuals, they are playing with the poise and cohesion that was missing. Kentucky has won close games and is within two games of its ninth national championship.

The timing could be better.

"Maybe they weren't ready to accept (them) two months ago," Kentucky coach John Calapari said of the changes during a conference call Monday. "Maybe they had to fail more, maybe they had to understand that you must surrender to your team, you must lose yourself in your team and understand that less is more when you're talking about team play."

Highlighting their coming-of-age performances are rallies against Wichita State and defending champion Louisville, and Sunday's Midwest Regional final win over Michigan. Against the Wolverines, the Wildcats controlled the tempo and put themselves in position to win the game.

"It just shows that we have really grown up," freshman center Dakari Johnson said after the 75-72 win. "We just executed the way we were supposed to."

The Wildcats have had many defeats to learn from this season, but dropping three of five down the stretch highlighted the frustrating growing pains of six high school All-Americans learning to play unselfishly.

The Wildcats have better managed their emotions and executed during a postseason where their only loss was by one point in the SEC championship to top-seeded Florida. They could meet the Gators for the fourth time this season if both reach Monday's championship.

The Wildcats have shot inconsistently in the tournament but are getting the looks they want. Sunday was a good day for Kentucky, and Aaron Harrison's game-winning three-pointer against Michigan showed how much faith the staff has in him to take — and make — a shot with the game on the line.

Other roles have also become clearer in recent weeks.

Harrison's twin brother, Andrew, has grown into Kentucky's floor general and fed Aaron

for Sunday's game-winner. Guard James Young is creating more shots inside and outside.

Julius Randle remains a double-double threat despite being double-teamed and is demanding the ball more in the paint. Seven-footer Johnson has started the past seven games and been more assertive under the basket on both ends, something the Wildcats will need

Cauley-Stein inured.

Just as important are reserves Alex Poythress, a sophomore, Marcus Lee and Dominique Hawkins, who chipped in baskets and energy against the Wolverines. Kentucky's reward is a 16th trip to the Final Four near Dallas, where the

Wildcats look to continue proving this is how they should've played all along.

"Before, I think coach was coaching emotion and he was coaching energy," Aaron Harrison said. "Now he's just teaching us. And I think that we have our own emotion."

Kentucky's Alex Poythress (22), Marcus Lee (00) and Dominique Hawkins (25) celebrate during the second half of the NCAA Midwest Regional final against Michigan last Sunday in Indianapolis.

DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP



NCAA TOURNAMENT: FINAL FOUR

Contrast name of the game at Final Four

By JOHN MARSHALL
The Associated Press

Florida coach Billy Donovan has his hands full preparing for Shabazz Napier and Connecticut in the Final Four, yet couldn't help but look across at the other side of the bracket.

Kentucky, with its waves of athletic freshmen against defensive and deliberate Wisconsin, yeah, that's going to be interesting to watch — even for a coach with more pressing things on his mind.

"It should be a great game," Donovan said during a conference call with the Final Four coaches on Monday. "Two, I think in a lot of ways, contrasting styles."

Contrast. This year's Final Four is full of it.

Kentucky has relied almost entirely on freshmen (again), while Florida followed a road paved by seniors.

The Gators' middle is muscular, anchored by lane bully Patrick Young. Wisconsin's Frank Kaminsky is a 7-footer who is just as comfortable on the three-point line as he is on the low block.

The Badgers' shot clock is more like an hour glass, offensive spacing and precision cutting setting up the perfect shot. The athletic Wildcats barge their way past opponents, getting out on the break or flying in for rebound slams.

Even the coaches have divergent paths: Donovan and Kentucky's John Calipari are Final Four regulars; UConn's Kevin Ollie and Wisconsin's Bo Ryan have crashed the party for the first time.

The 66-year-old Ryan is finally in the Final Four after so many near-misses, but he's the version of the big stage before after taking Wisconsin-Platteville to four national championships before moving on to Madison.

Ollie has never been this far; he's only been a head coach for two seasons and the Huskies weren't eligible for the NCAA tournament a year ago. He does have plenty of experience, though, playing for 11



Clockwise from top left, Kentucky coach John Calipari, Wisconsin coach Bo Ryan, Connecticut coach Kevin Ollie, and Florida's Billy Donovan guide a diverse group of teams into this year's Final Four.

teams during 13 NBA seasons before ending up in Storrs.

"I always prided myself as being a coach on the court," Ollie said. "I didn't really pride myself to looking over at the coach for the play. I wanted to be the extension of the coach so he didn't have to call the play."

The contrast in big men runs the spectrum in this year's Final Four.

Florida's Young is built like a 6-foot-9 bodybuilder, using his strength to block op-

ponents out of the lane and get to the rim. Kentucky's Julius Randle is of a similar barge-past-them mold, though with more of a face-up game, and UConn go-to big man DeAndre Daniels can shoot, slash and soar.

On the far end of the big-man spectrum is Kaminsky. A lanky 7-footer, he uses his length to score around the basket, but also has good shooting touch from the arc and an ability to find gaps in the opposing team's perimeter defense.

"Kaminsky for them is a unique player just in the fact that with his size, he can step away from the basket and shoot threes, he obviously can post up and score around the basket," Donovan said.

The range in experience couldn't be any wider between Kentucky and Florida.

The Gators are the most seasoned team left, led by seniors Young, Scottie Wilbekin, Casey Prather and Will Yegute. Those four alone had played nearly 400 combined games before Kentucky's freshmen had played one on the college level.

But the start-en-young mindset is nothing new in Lexington.

Calipari already perfected the ring-and-done, earning a national championship in 2012 behind Anthony Davis and his talented freshmen cohorts. After some shaky stretches during the regular season, Coach Cal has guided another group of young Cats — seven freshmen in the top eight of the rotation — into the Final Four.

Now, about that matchup of Badgers and Wildcats in North Texas on Saturday.

Kentucky's Wildcats are thoroughbreds, athletic players who seem to rotate in like it's a hockey game.

Wisconsin ... is ... more ... deliberate.

The Badgers work their offense like a precision craftsman, screening and cutting and spacing themselves perfectly to get the best possible shot, whether it's in the lane or beyond the arc, where just about everyone on the roster can hit from.

Defense has been a priority at Wisconsin since Ryan first arrived in Madison and little has changed in the 12 years since — other than the frustration level of teams trying to score against the Badgers.

"We are who we are right now, we're not changing," Ryan said. "They're who they are right now. Whatever people want to say about styles and all that, I leave that up to them. I've never gotten caught up in that kind of a conversation."

With so many contrasts — styles, players, coaches — there's plenty to talk about.

'D': List of national champions is littered with great defensive teams

FROM BACK PAGE

Florida is the best defensive team in the country, allowing just 88.5 points per 100 possessions, according to the analytics of KenPom.com. The Gators can be downright dominating on the defensive end, swarming ball-handlers and luring shooters into a false sense of security before rising up to swat shots back in their faces.

Defense has been a cornerstone for Bo Ryan since he won four national championships at Division III Wisconsin-Platteville and it's been the calling card — along with that ultra-patent offense — since he arrived at Madison. The Badgers are fundamental and fierce, allowing about 56 points per game to NCAA opponents — nearly eight less than before the tournament.

For all the flash of Kentucky's fabulous freshmen, these young Cats can get after you on D. Kentucky's latest one-and-done lineup is filled with long, athletic players who can harass on the perimeter and guard the rim — 10th nationally with 6.1 blocked shots per game — like few teams in college basketball.



Florida (36-2)
vs. Connecticut (30-8)
AFN-Sports
Midnight Saturday CET
7 a.m. Sunday JKT



Wisconsin (30-7)
vs. Kentucky (28-10)
AFN-Sports
2:30 a.m. Sunday CET
9:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

comes to defense. Ryan Boatright has become a point-guard stopper — he had four steals and helped limit Michigan State's Keith Appling to two points in the East Region final — and UConn seems to have an entire roster of rim protectors, ranking 16th nationally with 5.8 blocked shots per game.

"We are predators out there," UConn coach Kevin Ollie said.

In most years, the high-scoring teams often get the attention, whether it was Florida Gulf Coast's Dunk City a year ago or back to Houston's Phi Slamma Jamma of the early 1980s.

What usually happens at the finish? The best defensive teams end up with the hardware.

Louisville rode its swarming, chaos-inducing defense to a title last season.

The year before that, Anthony Davis and Kentucky's shot-swating young Cats set an NCAA record with 335 blocked shots on their way to the national championship.

In 2011: Connecticut 53, Butler 41.

Great defensive teams litter the list of national champions throughout history, too.

UNLV ran its wrecking crew through the bracket in 1990. North Carolina State and Georgetown let the air out of Phi Slamma Jamma in consecutive title games. Indiana played superb team defense during the last perfect season in 1976. Lew Alcindor and Bill Walton anchored the UCLA teams that ran off 10 titles in 12 years.

Go all the way back to the 1950s and the San Francisco teams that won consecutive championships had a young Bill Russell dominating the middle before he went on to do the same thing for the Boston Celtics.

"In the NBA, it always seems to come down to the teams that play the best defense and it's no different in college basketball," Arizona State associate head coach Eric Musselwhite said. "At the end of the day, no matter how well you score, you've got to be able to stop people."

The Final Four teams have proven they can do so far in the tournament.

Wisconsin opened the NCAA tournament by holding American to 35 points and reached the Final Four by preventing Arizona

from getting off a potential game-winning shot before the buzzer sounded in overtime.

Kentucky held Kansas State to 49 points in its NCAA opener and held Michigan State to nearly 4½ minutes of a three-point Midwest Region final victory that sent the Wildcats to the Final Four for the third time in four seasons.

UConn went toe-to-toe with one of the nation's best defensive teams in the East Region final, holding Michigan State to 39 percent shooting and two field goals — one at the buzzer after the game was decided — over the final 5 minutes.

Florida is the third team in NCAA tournament history to win four games by double digits and hold opponents under 70 points per game en route to the Final Four, limiting teams to an average of 55 points per game.

"We just take so much pride into being able to disrupt the team and being able to lock down guys," Florida forward Patrick Young said.

So do the other three teams, a big reason why they're all together in North Texas.

And for all the hype heaped on Connecticut's Shabazz Napier, the Huskies are pretty husky when it

NCAA TOURNAMENT: FINAL FOUR

One-and-done working fine for Kentucky

By DAVE SKRETTA
The Associated Press

DALLAS — Everyone has an opinion of John Calipari.

He's a pariah to some, successful only because of his ability to attract one-and-done stars destined for the NBA. They point to him as a scourge of college basketball, arguing that he's complicit — responsible, even — in stripping “student” from student-athletes.

Then there are those who see him as an elite coach, the architect of successful programs at UMass, Memphis and now Kentucky. He's churned out players who are making millions in the pros, and it is hard to argue that he's let any of them down.

“He does get the best guys, but he challenges them and pushes them to be who they are,” said New Orleans Pelicans guard Tyreke Evans, who played one season for Calipari at Memphis.

“That's the thing about playing for him,” Evans said. “You've got to be willing to take on the challenge, and take on him getting on you every day in practice. Some guys can handle it, some guys can't. Before you get there, he'll tell you that.”

Those who accept the challenge are usually rewarded.

His group at Memphis headlined by Derrick Rose reached the national title game in 2008, though the trip was later vacated. Another troupe of young stars led by Anthony Davis beat Kansas to win Kentucky's eighth national championship in 2012.

And the latest group of fabulous freshmen has the Wildcats back in the Final Four, knocking off three of the top four seeds in the Midwest Region along the way. They'll start five first-year players Saturday against Wisconsin, headlined by twin guards Andrew and Aaron Harrison and power forward Julius Randle, a potential lottery pick in the June draft.

“He's tough on us,” said Randle, when asked to describe what it's like to play for Calipari. “You may not like it some days, but at the end of the day, it's what's best for us.”

Calipari is hardly unique. Ohio State's Thad Matta has churned out five one-and-dones since 2006, and Rick Barnes of Texas has produced four. Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski has lost a couple, and could lose standout Jabari Parker.

It's just that Calipari is the biggest offender — or opportunist.

Since 2006, he's sent 13 one-and-done players to the NBA. They've combined to make more than \$181 million in salary alone. And if all of them play through their current contracts, that total would surpass \$460 million — nearly equaling the gross domestic product of the island nation of Tonga — even with several of them playing out relatively paltry rookie contracts.

That figure doesn't include endorsement deals, either. Throw in the millions they're paid for hawking sneakers, apparel and everything else, and the total closes in on a billion.

“He put a lot of responsibility

How Calipari stacks up

The coaches with the most players drafted since 2006 (played at least one college game in their first and only season out of high school):

Coches, school	Players
John Calipari, Kentucky	13
Thad Matta, Ohio State	5
Rick Barnes, Texas	4
Ben Howland, UCLA	3
Paul Hewitt, Georgia Tech	3

The one-and-done players under John Calipari since 2006:

Memphis (3): Shawne Williams (2006), Derrick Rose (2008), Tyreke Evans (2009)

Kentucky (10): Eric Bledsoe, DeMarcus Cousins, Daniel Orton, John Wall (2010); Brandon Knight (2011); Michael Kidd-Gilchrist, Anthony Davis, Marquis Teague (2012); Nerlens Noel, Archie Goodwin (2013).

SOURCE: The Associated Press

on us at a young age,” said Sacramento Kings forward DeMarcus Cousins, who played for Calipari at Kentucky. “That basically prepared us for the next level.”

It's important to note that Calipari doesn't agree with the current NBA rules, which require that players be a year removed from high school before entering

the draft. If it were up to him, he said last week, it would be a two-year waiting period.

“But it's between the NBA and the players' association. Having nothing to do with me or the NCAA,” Calipari said. “So I just think we're all playing the hand we're dealt. Kids are going on to the league from us and performing. And I'm proud of that. Would I like to have had them for four years? Yes. But I also like what's happened for them and their families.”

Many rival coaches have a similar viewpoint.

“I think when student-athletes pick a school and go to college, they go to the best chance to have the best life,” offered Kansas coach Bill Self, who had Andrew Wiggins become his third one-and-done player when he declared for the draft this week.

Of course, there are still plenty of detractors. Final Four counterpart Bo Ryan appeared to take a veiled jab at Calipari this week when he said: “What I like about the Wisconsin fans is they understand these are student-athletes who actually are here for the purpose of an education first and playing ball second. That's what I believe makes them really endearing.”



MARK CORNELISON, LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER/MCT

Kentucky Wildcats head coach John Calipari talks with Julius Randle during a Nov. 4 game. Randle is expected to be an NBA lottery pick after playing one season in Kentucky.

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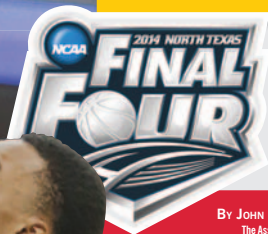


Top 'Cat

Jefferson helps Charlotte put losing in the past | **Page 56**

BIG D

Last teams standing are all bringing shutdown defenses to Texas



By JOHN MARSHALL
The Associated Press

Way back at the start of the season, amid all the whistles and fouls, defensive-minded teams appeared to be in trouble, a seemingly dying breed hamstrung by the NCAA's new hands-free rules.

As the season progressed, the top coaches and teams adjusted to the changes and found ways around the impediments.

Now, after all the increases in scoring and shooting percentages and offensive flow, the season has come down to a Final Four of teams held together by a common thread: shutdown defenses.

"In general, it's like most sports: Defense wins championships," said Bill Frieder, a longtime coach and TV/radio analyst.

"You still need to score, but basically when it gets right down to it, you have to make stops. The teams that can make a stop or two back to back are the teams that advance."

The teams remaining in this wild ride of an NCAA tournament earned a trip to North Texas this weekend because they can do just that.

SEE 'D' ON PAGE 62

Florida's Chris Walker blocks a shot by UCLA guard Norman Powell during the first half in a regional semifinal game on March 27 in Memphis, Tenn.

JOHN BAZEMORE/AP

■ Much more on Florida, UConn, Wisconsin & Kentucky, Pages 57-63

